DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 533 SO 023 687

TITLE	The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam. Alternatives for Public Debate and Policy Development. Choices for the 21st Century.
INSTITUTION	Brown Univ., Providence, RI. Center for Foreign Policy Development.
SPONS AGENCY	Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA.
PUB DATE	Oct 93
NOTE	111p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Choices Education Project, Center for Foreign Policy Development, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912 ($8).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Area Studies; Controversial Issues (Course Content); Discussion (Teaching Technique); Foreign Countries; Foreign Policy; *Futures (of Society); Higher Education; *International Relations; *Policy Formation; *Problem Solving; *Public Policy; Secondary Education; United States History; *Vietnam War
IDENTIFIERS	*Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This document is part of a series that seeks to help people think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve citizen involvement, and to encourage debate on public issues. The document examines the history of the conflict in Vietnam, both before and during U.S. involvement. Options that the document suggests for debate appear under the headings "Americanize the War, and Fight to Win!"; "Escalate Slowly and Control the Risks"; "Limit Our Involvement and Negotiate a Withdrawal"; and "Unilateral Withdrawal, Pull Out Now!" The document includes a note to teachers, a lesson plan and student activities, biographies of public figures involved in the Vietnam War, and recommended readings for the teacher and advanced student. (SG)

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CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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The Limits Of Power: The United States In Vietnam

SD 023487

ALTERNATIVES FOR PUBLIC DEBATE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development

Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912

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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project was established at the Center for Foreign Policy Development to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgment on policy priorities.

The Center for Foreign Policy Development of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University is a non-profit research organization. Its mandate is to bring together scholars, policymakers, and the public in a search for policy choices that can lead to a consensus on U.S. national security and foreign policy.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam was developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project with the assistance of the research staff at the Center for Foreign Policy Development and several other experts in the field. We wish to thank the following for their invaluable input.

Mark Garrison, *Former Director*
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David Willson, *Reference Librarian*
Green River Community College, Auburn, Washington

To Mary Lhowe, editorial associate at the Center for Foreign Policy Development, we extend our appreciation for editing this unit.

Special thanks also to Annie Wiart, a senior lecturer in the French Department at Brown University, for help in identifying and locating songs relating to the French Indochina War.

The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam is the second unit in a series that applies the choices approach to critical junctures in U.S. history. The Choices Education Project also publishes an ongoing series on current foreign policy issues. All units in the *Choices for the 21st Century* series are updated regularly.

CHOICES

for the 21st Century Education Project

October 1993

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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project develops curricula for high schools and colleges on current foreign policy issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project is a project of the **Center for Foreign Policy Development** of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

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Note to Teachers

Few topics are more difficult to teach, nor more important for our students to understand, than our country's involvement in Vietnam. Often doubting our own objectivity in presenting the material and sometimes wary of reopening wounds suffered from our own experiences during the Vietnam conflict, those of us who lived through the period find it a formidable subject. Just as the Great Depression and World War II were defining experiences for previous generations of Americans, so the Vietnam War was the defining experience that shaped perspectives and values for many who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. Even those of us who were too young to have personal recollections of the period have been affected by the backwash produced by Hollywood and the controversies surrounding American M.I.A.s and relations with Hanoi.

The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam takes students back into history so they can understand how successive U.S. administrations perceived the situation in Vietnam, evaluated the stakes, weighed the options, and implemented the policy decisions. Students are put in the positions of the chief U.S. decision-makers at the time. By avoiding the standard, frequently lifeless, history-as-the-inevitable presentation that textbooks often use, the unit seeks to revive the uncertainty, the complexity, and the tension of the history-making process as it occurred. Students become active participants in, rather than passive observers of, the decision-making process. The approach of the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project works particularly well in teaching about U.S. involvement in Vietnam for two reasons. First, at several key junctures during the development of U.S. policy in Vietnam, American decision-makers examined a number of options in a manner very similar to that which your students will follow. Second, since nearly a full generation has elapsed since the last act in the United States' Vietnam drama, today's students are not wedded to a particular viewpoint or, for that matter, haunted by the ultimate failure of U.S. policy. Thus, they are better able to consider options in a detached and critical fashion.

Before beginning this unit, students should have a basic understanding of the origins of the Cold War. *Coming to Terms With Power: U.S. Choices After World War II*, also produced by the Choices Education Project, covers this period thoroughly using primary sources and provides a solid foundation for this unit.

The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam relies heavily on primary sources, such as speeches, newspaper articles and editorials, political cartoons, songs, and policy memoranda. After-the-fact memoirs and post-mortem analyses are avoided. Rather, students are given an opportunity to work through difficult foreign policy questions, just as U.S. policymakers tried to work through and solve the Vietnam "problem." At the conclusion of the unit, students are called upon to examine and evaluate the often contradictory lessons that have been drawn from the U.S. experience in Vietnam.

Since the Vietnam experience was much more than a series of policy decisions and their consequences, three lessons on the human side of the war are offered as a follow-up to study of the decision-making process. These lessons — "Oral History and the Vietnam Experience," "The Songs of War," and "Values and the Vietnam War" — give teachers and students an opportunity to come to terms with the sociological and psychological impact of the war. The unit also includes a detailed timeline that charts the course of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Teachers should feel free to modify and adapt these lessons in a creative manner to reach, stimulate, and provoke student thinking about the period. These lesson plans are not a formula meant to be rigidly copied, but rather are suggestions for useful approaches to explore. Ultimately, teachers are in the best position to adapt these lessons to fit the needs and intellectual appetites of their students.

While *The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam* was developed to be taught over a ten-day period, the unit can be easily abridged. Keep in mind that the core of the unit is the reconstruction of the 1965 debate over the U.S. role in Vietnam. The activities employed in this unit stress interactive, group-oriented learning. Skills that are emphasized and reinforced in the lessons are: distinguishing facts from opinions and assumptions; interpreting information presented in graphic form; reasoning logically from cause (or assumption) to effect (or action); presenting

oral and written arguments clearly and convincingly; listening carefully to and analyzing the positions of others; extracting information from primary sources; interpreting visual presentations of opinion (cartoons); recognizing patterns in the historical record and drawing conclusions from these patterns; and clarifying the connection between basic values and policy choices.

For the full ten-day unit, students should receive copies of the "Student Text" on pages 1-35. Students should be given copies of the student activities in step with the lesson plans, rather than receiving them all at once. The drama of Vietnam should unfold gradually for students, just as it unfolded gradually for the American people. A brief list of recommended readings is included at the end of the unit. Below is a brief outline of the "Ten-Day Lesson Plan" found on pages 36-39.

Homework: Read "Historical Background: 1946-1954" and complete "Study Guide — Historical Background: 1946-1954"

Day One: The French Indochina War and the roots of U.S. involvement
Homework: Read assigned "Background Briefing" and complete "Instructions — Geneva Conference, 1954"

Day Two: The 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina
Homework: Read "Historical Background: 1954-1964" and complete "Study Guide — Historical Background: 1954-1964"

Day Three: The early stages of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the Tonkin Gulf resolution: discussion

Day Four: The Tonkin Gulf Resolution and the options for U.S. policy in Vietnam: discussion, organization, and preparation
Homework: Read assigned option and complete "Considering Your Option"

Day Five: Options for U.S. policy in Vietnam: debate
Homework: Read the four options and complete "Focusing Your Thoughts" and "Crafting Your Option"
**Extra Challenge:* Prepare position paper on proposed option

Day Six: Crisis and consensus
Homework: Read assigned news article and prepare summary

Days Seven and Eight: The war unfolds — 1965-75
Homework: Read "Values and the Vietnam War" and complete questions

Day Nine: Tangible and intangible values
Homework: Read "The Songs of War"

Day Ten: The songs of the Vietnam War
Homework: Read "Applying the Lessons of Vietnam"

Optional Lesson: Oral History and the Vietnam Experience

*Materials designated *Extra Challenge* are intended for advanced students.

Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War

Reproduced from Historical Maps on File

East Asia and the Pacific

Reproduced from Maps on File

Historical Background: 1946-1954

The American road to Vietnam began in early 1947 in the villages of Greece and in the mountains of Turkey. Shortly after the surrender of the Axis powers in 1945, the unity of World War II's victorious allies — the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union — unraveled. A conflict gradually emerged, pitting the Soviet Union against the United States and Britain (soon to be joined by France) over the shape of the postwar world. During the second half of 1946, U.S. decision-makers engaged in a spirited debate concerning the nature of Soviet intentions and what policies the United States should adopt toward the Soviet Union.

By early 1947, a consensus had been reached within the U.S. government. At the heart of U.S. strategy were the ideas of George Kennan, the State Department's principal expert on the Soviet Union. Kennan proposed that the United States work to halt both overt Soviet military expansion and the covert spread of communist influence through subversion and armed insurrection.

The U.S. policy of "containment" was first applied to defeat Soviet-supported rebels in Greece and to counter Soviet political pressure against Turkey. In a speech before Congress on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman outlined what would later become known as the "Truman Doctrine."

"At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life," Truman said, "The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

While his speech did not refer to either the Soviet Union or communism, Truman left no doubt as to the target of his challenge. In the following years, he laid

Note to Students

Rambo, anti-war protests, draft dodgers, and M.I.A.s are probably some of the images that Vietnam conjures up for you. The Vietnam War became part of our pop culture even before we as a nation digested the experience and arrived at a consensus on its meaning. The first step to understanding the Vietnam War is to examine how and why the U.S. government became deeply involved in a complex and costly war halfway across the globe.

In this unit, you will follow the path of U.S. decision-makers as the drama of Vietnam unfolded. You will be given the information that they had at the time and will be asked to view the world from the perspective of their values and objectives. With your classmates, you will analyze the situation in Vietnam at several key junctures and will explore the policy choices that were considered. Like an earlier generation of U.S. decision-makers, you, too, will be asked to recommend what role the United States should play in Southeast Asia during the 1960s.

This unit is built around selections from speeches, articles, political cartoons, songs, and memoranda. The documents were written during the course of the Vietnam War by the major participants in the decision-making process. These primary sources are the raw material that historians work with when they write history. As you read, focus not only on the ideas expressed, but also on the words and phrases chosen to express them. As you study these documents, ask yourself what are the values and perceptions behind these opinions and what are the implications of the recommendations.

the foundations for U.S. perceptions and policies during the Cold War. The Marshall Plan of 1948-1952 provided $12.5 billion in U.S. aid to help the countries of Western Europe recover from the war. In 1948, the United States organized a massive airlift to supply West Berlin after the Soviets cut off access to the city. The end of the Soviet blockade was followed by the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, linking the United States and Western Europe in a military alliance.

By the late 1940s, U.S. decision-makers hailed the policy of containment in Europe as a success. America's leadership of the "free world" had stopped aggression in Europe. In Asia, however, the situation was very different. The defeat of the Japanese in 1945 and the weakness of the British, French, and Dutch colonial powers in Asia sparked the rise of anti-colonial and nationalist movements. At the same time, the Chinese civil war between the communists led by Mao Zedong and the nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek resumed with full fury. After erupting originally in the late 1920s, the conflict had smouldered during the years of Japanese aggression.

In contrast to its active, interventionist role in Europe, the United States was very wary of becoming involved in China. While U.S. economic aid and military equipment were given to the nationalists, deeper commitment was avoided. U.S. leaders recognized that few Americans would support a land war on the Asian mainland. Instead, they chose to wait until the dust had settled. The tone of U.S. policy, however, changed dramatically after the communists drove the nationalist forces from mainland China in September 1949 and proclaimed the People's Republic of China. In the judgment of Washington, the new communist leaders were puppets of the Soviet Union. In response, the United States denied the communist government's legitimacy, refused to have any dealings with it, and blocked its assumption of the China seat in the United Nations.

France, meanwhile, was attempting to reassert its control over French colonial possessions in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). During the Japanese occupation, a Vietnamese anti-colonial movement led by Ho Chi Minh had grown in strength. In September 1945, less than a month after the Japanese surrender, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence from France in a speech patterned after the American Declaration of Independence. Temporary agreements struck after the war between the French and Ho Chi Minh's forces soon broke down, with each side blaming the other. By December 1946, a full-blown insurgency campaign by Ho's forces, the Vietminh, was underway. The French attempt to set up a competing Vietnamese government under French protection and headed by the hereditary emperor Bao Dai did little to check the growth of the insurgency. In January 1950, the Vietminh officially proclaimed the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam." Only communist China, the Soviet Union, and the communist countries of Eastern Europe extended diplomatic recognition to the Vietminh government. The United States ignored the new republic.

France's Indochina War

French armed forces in Southeast Asia soon numbered more than 150,000, while French casualties and financial costs steadily mounted.

By the spring of 1954, more than 92,000 troops had died fighting for the French Union Forces. While most of these casualties were Africans from French colonial possessions, Indochinese, and Foreign Legionnaires, nearly 21,000 Frenchmen had died. The loss of 8,200 French officers and noncommissioned officers exceeded the rate at which officers were being graduated from French military colleges. French efforts to transfer the burden of the fighting to the Vietnamese army under Bao Dai (a policy called "yellowing" by the French) proved unsuccessful. Many of the Vietnamese troops either deserted to the Vietminh or showed little enthusiasm for carrying on the fight to preserve French colonial rule. As France's counter-insurgency plans sputtered, much of the Vietnamese countryside, both in the north and in the south, came under Vietminh control.

In the United States, there was little interest at first in the French colonial war in Indochina. Even before the defeat of the Japanese, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had written: "I [have] for over a year expressed the opinion that Indochina should not go back to France but that it should be administered by

an international trusteeship. France has had the country — 30 million inhabitants — for nearly one hundred years, and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning."

Other U.S. leaders were likewise critical of French colonial practices. Since their own history was rooted in a long struggle against colonial rule during the 18th century, many Americans were sympathetic to the aspirations of the Vietnamese, even though they had little knowledge of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietminh, and what they stood for. Typical were the remarks of a young congressman and future president from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, who declared shortly after the war in Indochina had begun: "The United States must not ally itself with a colonial regime that [has] no real support from the people. The single most powerful force in the world is man's desire to be free."

The seeds of U.S. involvement

The Chinese communist conquest of the Chinese mainland in October 1949 and the communist North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950 recast the U.S. perspective on the war in Indochina and led to the first of many U.S. commitments in the area. The decision to send U.S. forces to the Korean peninsula was a particularly decisive turning point. Previously, U.S. defense strategists had defined a "strategic island defense perimeter" stretching from the Aleutian Islands down through Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines to Australia and New Zealand. Although South Korea fell outside the perimeter, President Truman reacted to the North Korean invasion by asserting that "they [the communists] won't get away with it! Period!" Similarly, Truman announced two days later that U.S. military aid would be provided to the French government and that a U.S. military mission would be sent to Indochina to advise the French forces.

In December, 1950, the U.S. government signed the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with France and the governments under French control in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The war in Indochina was no longer seen as a colonial war having little impact on American strategic interests. Instead, it was viewed as part of the U.S. effort to contain the influence of communism in Asia. U.S. economic and military aid to France soon accounted for nearly 80 percent of the cost of the war. Uncomfortable with the apparent role of supporting a colonial power, U.S. leaders continually prodded the French to grant real independence to the Vietnamese. The French, who ultimately were fighting to preserve their colonial empire, refused to accept the American advice.

The United States and its allies in the United Nations (UN) fought in Korea from June 1950 until an armistice was reached in July 1953. American and UN casualties rose sharply when regular units of the Chinese People's Army intervened in the conflict. As Chinese leaders had threatened, China acted after UN forces crossed the 38th parallel and entered North Korea. Initially, the United States had sought to unite North and South Korea, thereby punishing the aggressors in North Korea. China's entry into the war, however, resulted in a stalemate. U.S. leaders backed away from their original goal, fearing that the war might escalate further. Meanwhile, the American people became disillusioned, and public support for U.S. involvement dropped from a clear majority to about 30 percent of the American people. Although neither President Truman nor President Dwight D. Eisenhower had requested a declaration of war from Congress for U.S. action in Korea, the U.S. "police effort" involved nearly 5.8 million American troops. The loss of nearly 34,000 American lives in combat and an additional 20,000 lives due to accidents and disease suggested to many that the United States should not fight a land war for limited objectives on the Asian mainland.

The armistice that ended the Korean War left the borders on the peninsula unchanged. For the French government, the war's conclusion brought increasing pressure from French citizens to end the conflict in Indochina. A letter from Ho Chi Minh in November 1953 seemed to offer the possibility of a negotiated settlement. While Ho reaffirmed the intention of the Vietminh to fight to victory, he also suggested that if the French government wished "to bring about an armistice and solve the Vietnam problem through negotiations, the people and government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will be prepared to discuss the French proposal." Ho went on to fan the political

controversy within France concerning the war by stating:

"Today it is not only the independence of Vietnam that is exposed to serious attacks. Even the independence of France is being seriously threatened. On the one hand, American Imperialism is making French Colonialists carry on and extend the war of conquest in Vietnam for the purpose of rendering France weaker and weaker and taking over her position in Vietnam. On the other hand, the American Imperialists are forcing France to sign the EDC pact which implies that German militarism will be reborn." (The EDC, or European Defense Community, was an American-supported mutual security pact directed against the Soviets that would have integrated a rebuilt, powerful German army into Western defense plans.) Ho's statement was designed to strike a nerve in France by referring both to the widespread resentment within France of U.S. policies and to the possibility of a rearmed and powerful Germany.

While tempted by the promise of a negotiated settlement to the war, the French continued to pursue the so-called "Navarre Plan" — a strategy designed by the French commander in Indochina to crush the insurgency. General Henri Navarre's plan called for a dramatic buildup in the French Union forces, primarily by increasing the Vietnamese forces fighting for the French, and for the construction of strong strategic positions from which the French could block the movement of Vietminh forces and strike at their rear supply bases. With his declaration that, "now we can see it [victory] clearly — like light at the end of the tunnel," the general boosted the spirits of Frenchmen who refused to accept the loss of any part of their empire.

In November 1953, General Navarre daringly ordered six battalions of the French Union forces to be dropped into the valley at Dienbienphu, a mountainous region near the Laotian border in northwest Vietnam. Navarre hoped that his forces would block the Vietminh army from entering Laos and capturing positions on the upper Mekong River. Although the French position could be reinforced only by air, Navarre aimed to lure the Vietminh into a conventional battle in which its army would be overwhelmed by superior French air power and artillery. For seven years, the Vietminh had worn down the French with

Reprinted from Viet Nam Witness

hit-and-run attacks. Navarre's goal was to force the Vietminh to fight on French terms — engaging in a contest of firepower and entrenched positions.

France's defeat

Unfortunately for the French, their carefully laid plans were brilliantly countered by the Vietminh leader, General Vo Nguyen Giap. Strengthened by fresh supplies and artillery brought from China, Giap quickly deployed his forces — thirty-three infantry battalions and six regiments of artillery — in the hills surrounding the French position. The French high command had not believed it possible that the Vietminh could bring artillery to the tops of these hills. When the first salvos fell on the airplane landing strips that were the French forces' only link to the outside world, it was clear that the French battalions were trapped. Moreover, anti-aircraft guns obtained from the Chinese neutralized France's air power. The plight of the doomed French army at Dienbienphu would

occupy the attention of much of the world for the next four months, as daily press reports and diagrams of the battlefield traced the dwindling perimeter of the French position.

Meanwhile, the British and Soviets, who shared a strong interest in bringing the war in Southeast Asia to an end, had persuaded the major parties to the Indochina drama to attend an international peace conference to be held in Geneva during the spring of 1954. Participating would be Britain, the Soviet Union, France, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam representing the Vietminh, the United States, delegations representing the royal governments of Laos and Cambodia (which were supported by the French), a delegation from the French-supported Republic of Vietnam, and the Chinese People's Republic (communist China). For China, attendance at this international conference was a major boost to its international image, which had suffered as a result of China's intervention in the Korean War.

The United States was very reluctant to participate in this conference for two reasons. First, the United States had consistently and strongly denounced the Chinese communists as puppets of Moscow and international bandits whom they would neither recognize diplomatically nor deal with in any manner. Second, unlike the British and the French, who had been reconciled to at least a partial communist victory in Indochina, U.S. leaders still refused to consider the loss of any additional land to communist control. In fact, as the siege at Dienbienphu tightened during the months leading up to the conference, U.S.-French discussions touched on the possibility of employing American forces to reverse the communist tide in Indochina. Among the plans suggested by the U.S. military was the use of American air power, including perhaps nuclear weapons, to relieve the garrison at Dienbienphu, followed by the introduction of U.S. warships and ground troops to bolster the French effort in Indochina. This plan was ultimately rejected, primarily because of strong British opposition to any joint intervention; reservations by the U.S. Army chief of staff, General Matthew Ridgway, concerning a ground war in Asia; President Eisenhower's refusal to act without congressional approval; the skepticism of key congressional leaders when told that the British would not join; and finally, French coolness to the proposal when they realized that the United States expected them to grant the nations of Indochina full independence.

The last French position at Dienbienphu surrendered on May 7, 1954 to the Vietminh. The following day, the Geneva Conference formally opened. While the French government still had several hundred thousand troops in Indochina, the French will to continue the struggle had been lost at Dienbienphu.

Name: _____

Study Guide — Historical Background: 1946-1954

1. Describe the actions taken by the United States after World War II to halt what was seen as the threat of Soviet communism.

2. What was the U.S. attitude toward France's initial efforts to reassert its control over Indochina after World War II?

3. Explain why and how U.S. attitudes toward the French colonial war in Indochina changed in 1950.

4. In what sense were the United States and France "uneasy allies" from June 1950 to July 1954? (Hint: Did they share the same perceptions and objectives in the war?)

5. What does the cartoon to the right, drawn in 1954, suggest about the nature of the war in Indochina? If the cartoon had been drawn in 1947, how might the cartoonist have portrayed the war?

Fred Q. Seibel in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Reprinted with permission.

6. Why were the U.S. proposals to intervene in Indochina in 1954 during the siege of Dienbienphu never carried out?

7. Explain why the United States was reluctant to attend the Geneva Conference.

Extra Challenge: Explain the meaning of the statement at the beginning of this section: *The American road to Vietnam began in early 1947 in the villages of Greece and in the mountains of Turkey.*

Historical Background: 1954-1964

The Geneva Conference of 1954 produced a solution to the military conflict in Indochina, but did not resolve the political status of Vietnam. Hostilities were halted and French forces regrouped below the 17th parallel. Within two years, they withdrew completely from Vietnam. Above the 17th parallel, in what would become known as North Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh held undisputed power. Below the 17th parallel, the Republic of Vietnam, the former French protectorate, was led by Ngo Dinh Diem, an anti-communist Roman Catholic appointed prime minister by Bao Dai in June 1954. The accords signed at Geneva also called for Vietnam-wide elections to be held within two years for the purpose of achieving political unification. While the United States was clearly displeased with the apparent partial communist victory and refused to sign any formal declaration after the conference, Washington did pledge to respect the settlement and "view with grave concern any renewal of aggression in the area." The South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), for which the British and Americans had laid the groundwork before Geneva, was established in September 1954. While the new state of South Vietnam was not a signatory to the SEATO pact, since this would have compromised provisions in the Geneva Accords for Vietnam-wide elections, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were mentioned in a protocol to the collective defense treaty and guaranteed protection. As the French withdrew from South Vietnam, their presence was replaced by the arrival of U.S. economic aid and military advisers.

Diem was viewed in Washington as the only alternative to communist control over all of Vietnam. With strong anti-communist and anti-French credentials, Diem also had the backing of the small but powerful Roman Catholic minority in South Vietnam. Many of these Catholics had fled from the north after the settlement and fiercely opposed any accommodation with the communists. With the backing of his American advisers, Diem rejected in July 1955 the provisions of the Geneva Accords that called for Vietnam-wide elections within two years. Washington believed that the popularity of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh would guarantee a communist victory. Shortly thereafter, Diem defeated Bao Dai in a South Vietnamese referendum, receiving 98 percent of the vote. Diem's refusal to participate in Vietnam-wide elections by the June 1956 deadline brought no protests from either the Soviet Union or China. In fact, the Soviets proposed in 1957 that both Vietnams be admitted to the United Nations. Although rejecting this proposal, the United States continued to implement its plan to transform South Vietnam into a strong, independent, anti-communist nation which would block any further communist expansion into Southeast Asia.

U.S. aid to South Vietnam

By early 1960, the United States had sent more than $1 billion in economic and military aid to support Diem's regime. In addition to the aid, nearly 1,000 U.S. military personnel were stationed in Vietnam to serve as advisers to the Diem government and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Diem's increasingly dictatorial governing style, however, triggered several failed coup attempts and heightened violence in the countryside. By the late 1950s, remnants of Vietminh units (now called Vietcong) in South Vietnam had begun to attack local government officials. The Vietcong campaign was supported by the National Liberation Front, a collection of groups formed in December 1960 with North Vietnam's encouragement to oppose Diem's rule, . During 1961, more than 4,000 government officials, mostly lower ranking village chiefs, were assassinated.

Ironically, the first Asian crisis to confront President John F. Kennedy when he took office in January 1961 was not in Vietnam, but in neighboring Laos, where a complicated civil war was raging. Britain and the Soviet Union, the co-sponsors of the 1954 Geneva Conference, organized another conference in Geneva in 1961 to resolve the Laotian situation. The negotiations resulted in an agreement to respect Laos' neutrality. In contrast to the U.S. position in 1954, the Kennedy administration supported the outcome of the conference in Geneva. At the same time, Kennedy had

no intention of backing down from the U.S. commitment to an independent, anti-communist South Vietnam. In fact, a high-level U.S. mission headed by General Maxwell Taylor, soon to be appointed Kennedy's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Walt Rostow, a top State Department official, was sent to Vietnam in October 1961 to evaluate the situation and to make recommendations for stemming the communist advance. As General Taylor expressed it, "the question was how to change a losing game and begin to win, not how to call it off."

The Taylor-Rostow report reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam. "If Vietnam goes," the report argued, "it will be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to hold Southeast Asia." General Taylor recommended the introduction of 8,000 U.S. combat troops initially. To avoid drawing too much attention to the move, he proposed that the stated purpose of their mission be flood relief. Taylor also dismissed concerns about North Vietnam's response to this action:

"North Vietnam is extremely vulnerable to conventional bombing....There is no case for fearing a mass onslaught of Communist manpower into South Vietnam and its neighboring states, particularly if our air power is allowed a free hand against logistical targets."

In addition, Taylor recommended increased logistical support for the ARVN, the introduction of U.S. helicopters, and increased covert operations in Laos and North Vietnam. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Pentagon military planners, however, viewed Taylor's proposal as inadequate, and instead advocated in November 1961 the deployment of up to 200,000 U.S. combat troops:

"The fall of South Vietnam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accommodation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia and in Indonesia," according to the Defense Department's viewpoint. "The strategic implications worldwide, particularly in the Orient, would be extremely serious....The introduction of a U.S. force of the magnitude of an initial 8,000 men in a flood relief context will be of great help to Diem. However, it will not convince the other side (whether the shots are called from Moscow, Peiping [Beijing], or Hanoi) that we mean business. Moreover, it probably will not tip the scales decisively. We would be almost certain to get increasingly mired down in an inconclusive struggle. The other side can be convinced we mean business only if we accompany the initial force introduction by a clear commitment....We can assume that the maximum U.S. forces required on the ground in Southeast Asia will not exceed six divisions, or about 205,000 men."

Kennedy commits more troops

Adopting a compromise approach, President Kennedy sent helicopters, beefed up the aid package, and dramatically increased the number of U.S. military advisers in South Vietnam. From the end of 1961 to the end of 1962, the number of U.S. personnel rose from more than 3,000 to more than 11,000. These advisers, who accompanied ARVN units into battle, soon began to suffer casualties. In 1961, eleven were killed in combat; in 1962 thirty-one were killed; and in 1963 seventy-eight Americans died in the Vietnam War. No strong public commitment to the war was made to the American people by the president, and the Pentagon's estimate that as many as 200,000 troops would be needed was kept secret.

In the battlefield, the performance of the ARVN, guided by U.S. advisers and armed with new equipment, was mixed. Moreover, the Pentagon's "strategic hamlet program," which was designed to prevent the Vietcong from circulating freely among peasants in the countryside, was not generally successful. Nonetheless, optimistic statements were issued by the United States in mid-1963. "Victory in three years," predicted one. "There is a new feeling of confidence that victory is possible," said another. Kennedy himself declared, "We don't see the end of the tunnel, but I must say I don't think it is darker than it was a year ago, and in some ways [it is] lighter."

Not all U.S. decision-makers agreed with Kennedy's assessment. Mike Mansfield, the majority leader in the Senate, toured Southeast Asia in late 1962 and upon returning advised Kennedy that the United States should re-evaluate its commitment and involvement in South Vietnam:

"It is their country, their future that is at stake, not ours. To ignore that reality will not only be immensely

costly in terms of American lives and resources, but it may also draw us inexorably into some variation of the unenviable position in Vietnam that was formerly occupied by the French."

Mansfield and other critics of the war effort were particularly concerned about the growing political opposition to Diem's rule in South Vietnam. During the spring of 1963, for example, thousands of Buddhists led by militant monks in the northern city of Hue began protesting what they perceived as discrimination practiced against them by Diem and his predominantly Roman Catholic government. In response, government troops fired at the peaceful demonstrators, killing nine people. The Diem government ignored U.S. advice to seek reconciliation and insisted that the Buddhists were being manipulated by the Vietcong. In June 1963, the Buddhist protest hit the front pages of American newspapers when an elderly monk drenched himself with gasoline in a busy Saigon intersection and, with the assistance of other monks and nuns, burned himself to death. A written message left behind by the monk requested that the Diem government respect all religions and show charity and compassion in its dealings with the Buddhists. Again the Diem government blamed the incident on the Vietcong, and more fiery suicides followed.

The frustration of the Kennedy administration with Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, who headed the regime's secret police, led to the appointment in June 1963 of Henry Cabot Lodge as the new U.S. ambassador to Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital. Lodge, a Republican from Massachusetts, was Kennedy's choice to direct the tough new American line in Saigon. No longer would the United States "sink or swim with Ngo Dinh Diem," as American observers had remarked. Instead, Diem would be told to reform his government and build popular support for the war against the communists — or else. The choice of a prominent Republican for the sensitive post revealed Kennedy's desire to maintain bipartisan support for U.S. involvement. By the time Ambassador Lodge arrived in Saigon in August 1963, the situation seemed beyond hope. U.S. officials were talking about the need to replace Diem and his clique. Lodge was instructed to tell ARVN generals dissatisfied with Diem that the United States would condone a coup against the government, so long as the anti-communist struggle continued. On November 2, 1963, Diem and his brother were overthrown in a military coup and assassinated. President Kennedy himself would be dead from the bullets of an assassin within three weeks.

Karl Hubenthal in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

Johnson faces a key decision

Before Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, Lyndon Johnson had not played a major role as vice president in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. Although he had been sent to South Vietnam in May 1961 and hailed Diem as "the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia," Johnson had not been part of the inner circle of decision-makers who had shaped the growing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. Rather, Johnson was a master of domestic politics. Majority leader of the Senate for many years, Johnson as president wished to focus his efforts on an ambitious agenda to create a "Great Society" at home. His idol was Franklin D. Roosevelt, the domestic reformer, not Franklin D. Roosevelt, the world leader. Inheriting most of Kennedy's foreign policy advisers, including Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy,

and top State Department planner Walt Rostow, Johnson quickly found himself drawn deeply into the worsening crisis in Vietnam.

The replacement of Diem by a military government in Saigon did not bring the anticipated turnaround in the war effort. Complicating the situation was a series of power struggles within the South Vietnamese military leadership to determine who would exercise real power in the government. Meanwhile, the number of U.S. military advisers grew to more than 16,000 by the end of 1963 and would surpass 23,000 by the end of the next year. Frustrated by the hit-and-run tactics of the Vietcong in South Vietnam, many American military leaders were convinced that only heavy bombing of North Vietnam could stop the communists. Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay argued that "we are swatting flies when we should be going after the manure pile!" For his part, Johnson was most concerned about winning election in the fall of 1964 to a full four-year term as president. As he reportedly told his military advisers at a White House Christmas party in December 1963, "just let me get elected, and then you can have your war."

Johnson, however, was unable to turn his attention away from Vietnam for long. North Vietnam was continuing its support for the insurgency in the south, matching step-by-step the gradual escalation of U.S. involvement. During 1964, an estimated 10,000 North Vietnamese troops infiltrated the south. Although the communist forces in the south were still overwhelmingly South Vietnamese, these regular units from the north and the supplies that they brought gave the insurgents increased capability for large-scale actions. At the same time, the United States was spending more than $2 million a day in Vietnam and several Americans a week on average were being killed in battle. In March 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara, returning from his second trip to Vietnam in four months, reported that:

"The situation has unquestionably been growing worse, at least since September [1963]....In terms of government control of the countryside about 40 percent of the territory is now under Viet Cong control or predominant influence....Large groups of the population are now showing signs of apathy and indifference....The ARVN and paramilitary desertion rates, and particularly the latter, are high and increasing."

As had become the pattern, increased aid in the form of more military equipment was recommended. In addition, U.S. leaders told the Saigon government that "we are prepared to furnish assistance and support to South Vietnam for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control."

Name: _____

Study Guide — Historical Background: 1954-1964

1. Why did the United States decide to give its support to the Diem government in South Vietnam after the Geneva Conference?

2. Why did the United States and Diem ignore the provisions in the Geneva Accords that called for national elections in 1956? Do you think that such elections could have been fair?

3. Explain why the United States became disillusioned with the Diem government in the early 1960s.

4. Many historians have second-guessed the actions of the Kennedy administration in the fall of 1963. Discuss these actions in the context of the adage "don't change horses in mid-stream."

Extra Challenge: While no one can say what President Kennedy might have done had he lived, his advisers continued to plan and direct U.S. involvement in Vietnam under President Johnson. Does this shed any light on the long-standing debate among historians as to whether great figures shape events or whether the actions of people are determined by events beyond their control?

Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution

The framers of the United States Constitution divided the war-making power of the new republic between the executive and the legislative branches. While Article II names the president as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, in Article I the Congress is granted the power to declare war. In addition, Congress possesses the power to appropriate money. This so-called "power of the purse" ensures that Congress will play a significant role in determining defense spending in wartime. The last time that Congress was asked to formally declare war was December 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Since World War II, presidents have repeatedly ordered military action without requesting a formal declaration of war. Even the protracted war in Korea, which cost over 53,000 American lives, was technically a "police action" conducted under the authority of the United Nations. This is not to suggest, however, that Congress has disapproved of the occasions in which the United States has sent military forces abroad. On the contrary, almost without exception large majorities of both Houses have strongly supported, at least initially, such presidential actions. The subject of this lesson is how the administration of President Johnson obtained congressional authority for the growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam in 1964.

Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Plan

As the 1964 presidential elections approached, President Johnson saw the need for a congressional resolution that would endorse the growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Such a resolution would strengthen the president's credibility abroad and give him increased flexibility. Johnson was also worried about Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for president, who had taken a tough stance in dealing with communism. Johnson hoped that lining up solid majorities of both Republicans and Democrats in Congress behind his Vietnam policies would take the sting out of Goldwater's criticisms. Accordingly, presidential aides William Bundy and Walter Rostow drafted the following resolution in June 1964:

"...Whereas the Communist regime in North Viet Nam, with the aid and support of the Communist regime in China, has systematically flouted its obligations under these [Geneva] accords and has engaged in aggression against the independence and territorial integrity of South Vietnam by carrying out a systematic plan for the subversion of the Government of South Viet Nam...

"Whereas the United States has no territorial, military or political ambitions in Southeast Asia, but desires only that the peoples of South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia should be left in peace by their neighbors to work out their own destinies in their own way...

"Whereas it is essential that the world fully understand that the American people are united in their determination to take all steps that may be necessary to assist the peoples of South Viet Nam and Laos to maintain their independence and political independence....Be it resolved...

"That the United States regards the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of South Viet Nam and Laos as vital to its national interest and to world peace....To this end, if the President determines the necessity thereof, the United States is prepared, upon the request of the Government of South Viet Nam or the Government of Laos, to use all measures, including the commitment of armed forces to assist that government in the defense of its independence and territorial integrity against aggression or subversion supported, controlled or directed from any Communist country..."

Johnson did not want to appear rash. During the presidential campaign, he sought to portray Goldwater as trigger-happy and reckless. For that reason, the president decided to wait for further North Vietnamese provocation before sending his request to Congress. In the meantime, the Pentagon was instructed to prepare detailed plans for bombing North Vietnam.

Questions for class discussion:

1. Why did Johnson believe that bipartisan congressional support for his policies in Vietnam was so important?

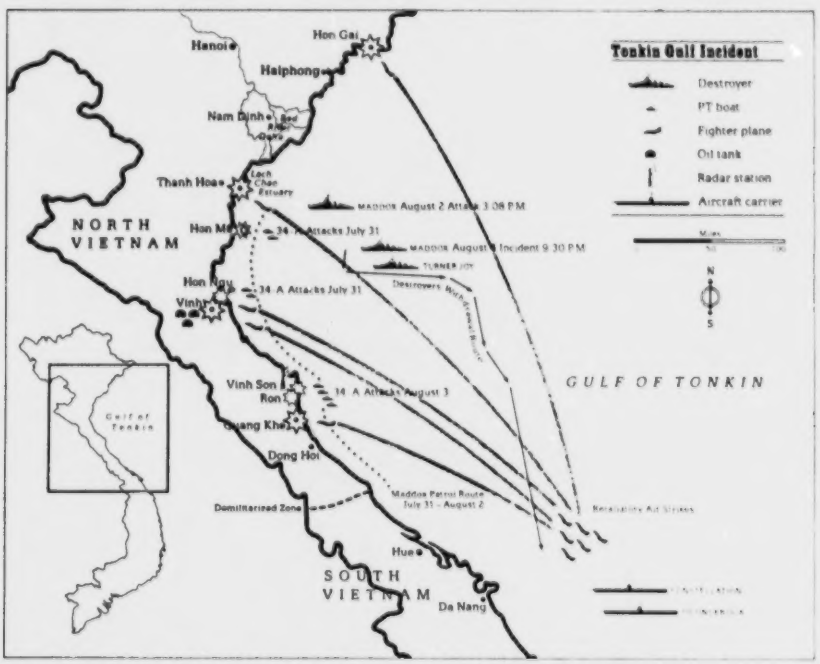
2. Does the government of a democracy have to operate under a different set of rules from those of a dictatorship when formulating foreign policy?

Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Incident

During the summer of 1964 the United States was directing two ongoing naval operations in the Gulf of Tonkin, north of the 17th parallel off the coast of Vietnam. One operation involved South Vietnamese commandos, trained by the C.I.A., who would launch hit-and-run strikes on North Vietnamese coastal sites using very fast patrol boats. The other operation would send U.S. warships, equipped with sensitive electronic gear, to cruise to within eight miles of the North Vietnamese coast in order to trigger the operation of North Vietnamese radar installations and then take measurements of their locations and frequencies. The U.S. destroyer *Maddox* was engaged in such a mission off the North Vietnamese coast on August 1. The day before, several South Vietnamese patrol boats had raided North Vietnamese coastal positions in the same area.

On the morning of August 2, the *Maddox* was attacked by several North Vietnamese patrol boats. Several torpedoes missed their target, but machine gun fire hit the U.S. warship. There were no casualties. The *Maddox* had begun firing as soon as the patrol boats approached, sinking one patrol boat and damaging two others. Planes from the nearby U.S. aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga* assisted by strafing the enemy boats. When Johnson received word of the incident, he sent a stern warning to North Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi. He also informed Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that, while he did not wish to widen the war, the United States would not tolerate attacks by the North Vietnamese on U.S. warships in international waters. No acts of reprisal were ordered at the time.

To underscore American determination, the *Maddox*, joined by a second destroyer, the C. *Turner Joy*, were ordered back into the same area the next day. Several South Vietnamese patrol boats also staged another hit-and-run mission in the area. During that evening, radar and sonar readings taken by the crews of the destroyers seemed to indicate that both U.S. destroyers were under attack. No enemy boats were actually seen and no hostile gunfire was heard. Nevertheless, both destroyers fired for several hours at the unseen attackers. Heavy rain that evening in the Tonkin Gulf contributed to the confusion. When Johnson was notified of the situation, he decided to order retaliation, and to ask Congress immediately for a resolution of support. (Several days later, analysis of the incident raised doubts that the two destroyers had actually come under attack. Johnson himself remarked to an aide, "Hell, those dumb stupid sailors were just shooting at flying fish.")



Questions for class discussion:

1. Some have argued that the North Vietnamese were to blame for the incident, while others have maintained the United States was at fault for the incident. Discuss the case that both sides might make.

2. Why do you think that President Johnson went to Congress and the American people immediately, rather than waiting for a full investigation of the second "attack"?

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Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Request

On the evening of August 4, the day of the controversial second "attack" on U.S. naval vessels in the Tonkin Gulf, President Johnson went on national television to announce that he had ordered reprisal bombing of North Vietnamese naval facilities and to declare that "repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply." The next day the following resolution was sent to Congress for action:

"Whereas the naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace;

"Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom;

"Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way. Now therefore, be it

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled that the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

"Sec. 2 The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of the international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state [South Vietnam] of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

"Sec. 3 This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress."

Questions for class discussion:

1. Do the changes in wording from the draft of June appear to strengthen the hand of the President in directing U.S. policy in Vietnam? Explain by comparing specific phrases from the two documents.

2. Sometime later, Johnson remarked to aides that this resolution was "like grandma's nightshirt — it covered everything." What did he mean by this?

Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf: The Action

After two days of debate, both Houses of Congress, with only Senators Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening dissenting, passed the Tonkin Gulf resolution. This congressional action would be cited by the administration as the necessary and sufficient legal authority for its actions in Vietnam during the next several years. Subsequent annual requests for funds to continue the war were regularly approved by Congress. Even congressmen who opposed the war were reluctant to deny the funds and resources necessary to support the U.S. effort. The Tonkin Gulf resolution was repealed by the Senate in June 1970. U.S. involvement in the war continued until January 1973, although no formal declaration of war was ever requested.

Question for class discussion:

If the administration had foreseen how long and costly the war would be, do you think that it would have chosen the same means to obtain congressional support and legal authority?

Extra challenge: One of the major reasons for studying history is to discover connections and recurring patterns. Several previous incidents in U.S. history are worth comparing to the passage of the Tonkin Gulf resolution, including the incident which sparked the declaration of war against Mexico in 1846 and Congressman Lincoln's "spot resolutions," the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor in 1898 and the subsequent war with Spain, and the attack on the destroyer *Greer* by a German submarine in September 1941, when the United States was still a neutral.

Summer 1965 — The Four Options

The military situation in South Vietnam worsened rapidly during the first six months of 1965. Although a campaign of limited bombing against selected targets in North Vietnam (Operation Rolling Thunder) was initiated in February, there was no indication that either Hanoi's determination or the flow of supplies to the Vietcong in the south was diminished. The ARVN continued to lose territory to Vietcong control and the Saigon government appeared to have little support among the South Vietnamese in the countryside. U.S. combat units were dispatched in March for the specific purpose of defending U.S. installations in South Vietnam. Despite the deployment of more U.S. military personnel, large amounts of economic aid, and American logistical support, the Vietcong in the opinion of some experts controlled as much as 50 percent of the South Vietnamese countryside by the summer of 1965 and would soon possess the capability to cut the country in half.

As the situation in Vietnam deteriorated, Johnson administration officials recognized the need for a thorough re-examination of American policy, tactics, and strategy in Southeast Asia. The basic questions raised were: What was the nature of the conflict in Southeast Asia? What U.S. interests were at stake? What should be the chief objectives of the United States in Vietnam? What steps should the United States take to achieve these objectives?

Look carefully at the cartoons below.

Pierre Bellocq in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1965.

THE VIETNAM WAR
"The pattern as a whole is undecipherable; the brain becomes confused and the total effect is quite maddening!"

Frank Interlandi in *The Los Angeles Times*. Copyright © 1965. Reprinted with permission.

1. Who are the three doctors? Who is the patient?

2. In portraying the American leaders as doctors, what is the cartoonist suggesting about the ability of the United States to diagnose and cure the problems of South Vietnam and other countries?

3. What does this cartoon imply about the seriousness of the situation?

4. In contrast, what does the cartoon on the right suggest about the situation in Vietnam and the ability of U.S. leaders to understand and resolve the problem?

Options in Brief

Option 1 — Americanize the War, and Fight to Win!

The survival of free, independent, non-communist South Vietnam is necessary to protect U.S. strategic interests in the Western Pacific and in East Asia. The United States must take whatever steps are necessary to defend South Vietnam against communist aggression and to demonstrate that the communists cannot succeed in using these so-called "wars of national liberation" to enslave more people. We have no choice: we must stop the advancing wave of communist aggression in Southeast Asia now! The United States must take over the war. We must not repeat the mistake of Korea, where the U.S. military was denied the political backing to achieve victory. U.S. forces in Vietnam should not be asked to fight a war with one hand tied behind their backs. There is no substitute for military victory. We must fight to win.

Option 2 — Escalate Slowly and Control the Risks

The honor, determination, and credibility of the United States are at stake in South Vietnam. What ally could rely on American assurances in the future if we allow South Vietnam to fall under communist control? What potential enemy would be deterred by our pledge to oppose aggression if we fail to stand up to North Vietnam? We must take effective measures to convince the North Vietnamese and the insurgents in the south that they will not be permitted to achieve control of South Vietnam. Slowly and steadily squeezing harder on North Vietnam by increasing our bombing in a graduated, calculated manner would be the most effective approach. At the same time, we would avoid provoking increased involvement by the Soviet Union and China, and alarming the American people with a hasty, and perhaps unnecessary, crash buildup. We must control the pace of U.S. involvement.

Option 3 — Limit Our Involvement and Negotiate a Withdrawal

The potential risks of increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam now clearly outweigh any likely benefits of our presence. The military situation has deteriorated to the point that even massive American troop reinforcements cannot guarantee victory. The present government in Saigon is an unstable military dictatorship that has little popular support. The longer that we are in Vietnam and the larger our involvement, the greater the stakes become and the more difficult it will be to withdraw. U.S. prestige and credibility would be seriously damaged by such an outcome. No additional American forces beyond those already promised should be sent to Vietnam. The bombing campaign against North Vietnam should be reduced, as should be the scope of U.S. military operations in the south. Meanwhile, we should seek a negotiated settlement that would enable the United States to gradually reduce our presence in South Vietnam. We must cut our losses, but not at the cost of seriously damaging American honor and credibility.

Option 4 — Unilateral Withdrawal, Pull Out Now!

The present involvement of the United States in the Vietnamese civil war is contrary to American values and interests. We have no right to impose upon the people of Vietnam a government of our choosing. We have no strategic interests in Vietnam which would require even minimal American military involvement. To assume that we know what is best for a people halfway across the world having completely different traditions and values, and to employ our overwhelming military might to impose our solution on them, is unjustified, arrogant, and immoral. The United States cannot preserve its democratic values at home while it is betraying them abroad. The U.S. government should immediately halt the deployment of additional American troops to Vietnam, and should begin the withdrawal of those forces currently there. Americans will understand that the principles which have guided this nation from its birth are more important than a poorly conceived policy based on an incomplete understanding of a complex situation thousands of miles away.

OPTION 1

AMERICANIZE THE WAR, AND FIGHT TO WIN!

The survival of free, independent, non-communist South Vietnam is necessary to protect U.S. strategic interests in the Western Pacific and in East Asia. For the last ten years, this small U.S. ally has been the victim of aggression by armed minorities within South Vietnam who are directed and supplied by communist North Vietnam. More recently, communist North Vietnam has sent into South Vietnam trained military units that have launched unprovoked armed attacks against the government of South Vietnam. The United States must take whatever steps are necessary to defend South Vietnam against this communist aggression and to demonstrate that the communists cannot succeed in using these so-called "wars of national liberation" to enslave more people. If South Vietnam were to fall to the communists, its immediate neighbors — Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand — would become subject to increased communist subversion and aggression. Just as a row of dominos will topple one by one if the first domino goes down, so the free nations of Southeast Asia could fall under communist control. Even our allies in the Philippines and Malaysia would find it difficult to resist this pressure. Ultimately, all of our country's strategic, political and economic interests in this vital area of the world would be endangered. Our avowed enemies, China and Soviet Russia, would expand their influence and increase their strength. We have no choice: we must stop the advancing wave of communist aggression in Southeast Asia now!

We learned from the events leading up to World War II, specifically from the appeasement of Adolf Hitler at Munich in 1938, that if aggression is not checked immediately, the aggressors are encouraged. Similar challenges have been met by the American people in the recent past. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO stopped Soviet communism from expanding into Western Europe after World War II. Communist guerrilla forces were defeated with U.S. aid in Greece (1946-7), Malaysia (1948-52), and the Philippines (1946-54). In addition, overt communist armed aggression was repulsed by the United States and its free world allies in South Korea in 1950-53.

The situation today in South Vietnam is critical. The United States must take over the war. Our troop commitment should be immediately increased from the present level of 70,000 to 400,000, if necessary, by the end of this year. U.S. military operations in the south should shift away from the passive defense of static positions and adopt aggressive search-and-destroy tactics against communist forces. In addition, sustained, massive bombing of military targets in North Vietnam will slow the infiltration of troops and supplies and punish the aggressor. We must not repeat the mistake of Korea, where the U.S. military was denied the political backing to achieve victory. U.S. forces in Vietnam should not be asked to fight a war with one hand tied behind their backs. There is no substitute for military victory. We must fight to win.

Warren King in *Time*, 1966.

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FROM THE RECORD

excerpt from President Harry Truman's speech, March 12, 1947 (The Truman Doctrine):

"At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

excerpt from speech by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, March 29, 1954:

"If the Communist forces won uncontested control over Indochina or any substantial part thereof, they would surely resume the same pattern of aggression against other free peoples in the area. The propagandists of Red China and Russia make it apparent that the purpose is to dominate all of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is the so-called "rice bowl" which helps to feed the densely populated region that extends from India to Japan. It is rich in many raw materials, such as tin, oil, rubber, and iron ore. It offers industrial Japan potentially important markets and sources of raw materials.

"The area has great strategic value. Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases. Communist control of Southeast Asia would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, with whom we have treaties of mutual assistance. The entire Western Pacific area, including the so-called "offshore island chain" would be strategically endangered."

excerpt from President Dwight Eisenhower's speeches given in April 1954 and April 1959:

"Strategically, South Vietnam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a hitherto free region. The remaining countries in Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement. The freedom of 12 million people would be lost immediately and that of 150 million others in adjacent lands would be seriously endangered. The loss of South Vietnam would have grave consequences for us and for freedom....You have a row of dominos set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."

excerpt from Senator John Kennedy's speech in June 1956:

" [Vietnam is] the cornerstone of the free world in Southeast Asia, the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike. Burma, Thailand, India, Japan, the Philippines and obviously Laos and Cambodia are among those whose security would be threatened if the red tide of Communism overflowed into Vietnam."

excerpt from United States National Security Action Memorandum, March 17, 1964:

"We seek an independent, non-communist South Vietnam...unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance."

excerpt from a memorandum written by Walt Rostow, chairman of the State Department Policy Planning Council during November 1964:

"[T]he critical moves are, I believe, these: the introduction of some ground forces in South Viet Nam and, possibly, in the Laos corridor; a minimal installation of the principle that from the present forward North Viet Nam will be vulnerable to retaliatory attacks for continued violation of the 1954-1962 Accords. Perhaps most important of all, the introduction into the Pacific Theater of massive forces to deal with any escalatory response, including forces evidently aimed at China as well as North Viet Nam, should the Chinese Communists enter the game....Their judgment [the North Vietnamese] will depend not merely on our use of force and force dispositions but also on the posture of the President, including commitments he makes to our own people and before the world, and on our follow-through....They will not actually accept a setback until they are absolutely sure that we really mean it. They will be as searching in this manner as Khrushchev [the Premier of the Soviet Union] was before he abandoned the effort to break our hold on Berlin and as Khrushchev was in searching us out on the Turkish missiles before he finally dismantled and removed his missiles [from Cuba in 1962]. Initial rhetoric and military moves will not be enough to convince them....Compliance [from North Vietnam] should include the following: the removal of Viet Minh troops from Laos; the cessation of infiltration of South Viet Nam from the north...and the overt statement on Hanoi radio that the Viet Cong should cease their operations and pursue their objective in South Viet Nam by political means....The odds are pretty good, in my view, that, if we do these things in this way, the war will either promptly stop or we will see the same kind of fragmentation [gradual loss of effectiveness] of the Communist movement in South Viet Nam that we saw in Greece after the Yugoslav frontier was closed....At this stage of history we are the greatest power in the world — if we behave like it."

excerpt from speech by President Lyndon Johnson, April 26, 1965:

"Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Vietnam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next. We must say in Southeast Asia, as we did in Europe, in the words of the Bible: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further!'...Over this war, and all Asia, is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peking [Beijing]....[China] is a nation which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purpose."

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Turn over primary responsibility for directing and prosecuting the war to the U.S. military.

2. Rapidly increase the U.S. troop commitment to 400,000, if necessary, and pursue an aggressive search-and-destroy campaign against the communist forces in the south.

3. Increase the bombing of North Vietnam to include all targets involved in the war effort.

4. Mobilize the reserves and shift U.S. economic resources toward the war effort.

5. Explain to the American people the gravity of the situation in Vietnam, the values that are at risk, and the anticipated costs and duration of the effort required.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

- The failure of the Western democracies at Munich in 1938 to check the aggression of Hitler led to further Nazi aggression and World War II.

- Communist-led insurgencies in Greece, Malaysia, and the Philippines were defeated with the assistance of the United States and its free world allies.

- The expansion of communist power into Western Europe in the late 1940s was thwarted with a determined combination of U.S. political, economic, and military efforts.

- The Soviet Union abandoned its attempt to force the United States out of Berlin during the early 1960s when convinced of American determination and military superiority.

ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 1

- Only immediate, massive U.S. intervention can prevent the collapse of the ARVN and the fall of the pro-American Saigon government.

- Preserving a strong, free South Vietnam will stop the further expansion of communism into Southeast Asia and protect U.S. strategic interests.

- Defeating the communist-led insurgency in South Vietnam will deter the communists from launching similar "wars of national liberation" in other parts of the world.

- A major military effort by the United States now will prevent the need for a more costly effort later on.

- North Vietnam, a third-rate military power, will inevitably cease its aggression in the face of determined U.S. military action.

OPTION 2

ESCALATE SLOWLY AND CONTROL THE RISKS

The honor, determination, and credibility of the United States are at stake in South Vietnam. Since 1950, successive U.S. governments under Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson have pledged to protect South Vietnam from communist aggression. When South Vietnam was created in 1954 at the Geneva Conference, the United States declared its opposition to any attempts to alter the settlement by force. Shortly afterward, the United States and its South East Asian Treaty Organization allies pledged to protect South Vietnam and its neighbors, Laos and Cambodia. U.S. economic, political, and military aid helped this young nation in its infancy. Our country is internationally recognized as the "godfather" and patron of South Vietnam. The increasingly visible U.S. commitment over the past four years has linked our country's prestige and credibility with the fate of South Vietnam. What ally could rely on American assurances in the future if we allow South Vietnam to fall under communist control? What potential enemy would be deterred by our pledge to oppose aggression if we fail to stand up to North Vietnam? Could the Western Europeans be expected to trust us with their fate in the face of Soviet nuclear threats when we cannot defend the South Vietnamese from insurgents armed only with conventional weapons?

History shows us that when nations lose their credibility, their power to influence others and protect their national interests suffer. When the Western European democracies reneged on their commitments to Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 and allowed Adolf Hitler to pressure that country into submission, they also cast in doubt their promise to defend Poland from German attack. World War II was the result. Similarly, the failure of the United States to back up its warnings to Japan in the 1930s emboldened Japanese militarists to extend their aggression to Pearl Harbor. In contrast, U.S. successes in the late 1940s and 1950s in thwarting Soviet expansion into Western Europe were due to the credibility of our pledge to counter Soviet aggression with massive, overwhelming retaliation. Likewise, our success in 1962 in forcing the Soviets to remove their missiles from Cuba demonstrated that a measured, credible response to aggression will convince even the most powerful of enemies to back down.

We must take effective measures to convince the North Vietnamese and the insurgents in the south that they will not be permitted to achieve control of South Vietnam. Whatever actions are necessary to convince the North Vietnamese of this must be taken. Slowly and steadily squeezing harder on North Vietnam by increasing our bombing of military targets in a graduated, calculated manner would be the most effective approach. Such a strategy will convince the communists of our determination and overwhelming military superiority. At the same time, we would avoid provoking increased involvement by the Soviet Union and China, and alarming the American people with a hasty, and perhaps unnecessary, crash buildup. In addition to stepped-up bombing, additional American troops should be dispatched into South Vietnam to check the tide of government defeats and buy enough time for our campaign against North Vietnam to achieve its objectives. Communist supply lines from Laos and the north should be cut by bombing, while long-range programs to strengthen the ARVN and build public support for the Saigon government should be initiated.

Although the American people must understand the need for increased U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, we should not put the economy on a war footing, nor should the reserves be called up. These actions could endanger our domestic programs and provoke public demands for more drastic military action. We must control the pace of U.S. involvement.

Bill Mauldin in the Chicago *Sun-Times*. Copyright © 1966.

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FROM THE RECORD

excerpt from President Dwight Eisenhower's October 26, 1960 letter to President Diem of South Vietnam:

"For so long as our strength can be useful, the United States will continue to assist Vietnam in the difficult yet hopeful struggle ahead."

excerpts from Senator John Kennedy's speech in June 1956:

"[Vietnam is] a proving ground for democracy in Asia...a test of American responsibility and determination in Asia....[I]f we are not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we helped to shape its future."

excerpts from President John Kennedy's Inaugural Address, January 1961:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty....To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the binds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required."

excerpt from letter of President John Kennedy to President Diem of South Vietnam, December 14, 1961:

"They [the communists] have violated the provisions of the Geneva Accords designed to ensure peace in Vietnam and to which they bound themselves in 1954....Although not a party to the Accords, [the United States] declared that it "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security....In accordance with that declaration, and in response to your request, we are prepared to help the Republic of Vietnam to protect its people and to preserve its independence."

excerpt from President Lyndon Johnson's speech, April 25, 1965:

"Why are we in South Vietnam? We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Vietnam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Vietnam defend its independence. And I intend to keep our promise. To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemy, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong....We will not be defeated! We will not grow tired! We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement."

excerpts from Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton's memoranda of March 24, 1965 and January 19, 1966:

"U.S. aims: 70 percent to avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor); 20 percent to keep SVN (and the adjacent) territory from Chinese hands; 10 percent to permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life. ALSO to emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used. NOT to "help a friend," although it would be hard to stay in if asked out....The present U.S. objective in Vietnam is to avoid humiliation. The reasons why we went into Vietnam to the present depth are varied; but they

are largely academic. Why we have not withdrawn from Vietnam is, by all odds, one reason: (1) to preserve our reputation as a guarantor, and thus to preserve our effectiveness in the rest of the world....At each decision point we have gambled; at each point, to avoid the damage to our effectiveness of defaulting on our commitment, we have upped the ante....It is important that we behave so as to protect our reputation....The "softest" credible formulation of the U.S. commitment is the following: DRV [North Vietnam] does not take over South Vietnam by force....This does not necessarily rule out: a coalition government including Communists, [or] a free decision by the South to succumb to the VC or to the North, [or] a neutral (or even anti-U.S.) government in SVN...if the Communist take-over was fuzzy and very slow."

excerpts form National Security Action memorandum, April 6, 1965:

"5. The President approved an 18-20,000 man increase in U.S. military support forces to fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel. 6. The President approved the deployment of two additional Marine Battalions and one Marine Air Squadron and associated headquarters and support elements. 7. The President approved a change of mission for all Marine Battalions deployed to Vietnam to permit their more active use under conditions to be established and approved by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State....We should continue the present slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER [the air campaign against North Vietnam]. The target systems should continue to avoid the effective GGI range of MIGs. We should continue to vary the types of targets, stepping up attacks on lines of communication in the near future and possible moving in a few weeks to attacks on the rail lines north and northeast of Hanoi....Blockade or aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports need further study and should be considered for future operations. It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets and other third countries, but also offers many advantages. Air operation in Laos, particularly route blocking operations...should be stepped up....The President desires that with respect to the actions in paragraphs 5 through 7, premature publicity be avoided by all possible precautions. The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes of policy....The President's desire is that these movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existing policy."

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Send additional American ground troops to South Vietnam to check the tide of communist advances.

2. Undertake a stepped-up bombing campaign against military targets in North Vietnam to convince North Vietnamese leaders to halt their involvement in the war.

3. Initiate long-term programs to strengthen the ARVN, and increase support for the Saigon government by involving U.S. forces in building schools, hospitals, and other civilian projects.

4. Assure our allies and the Soviet Union that, while not seeking to widen the war, we will not accept the defeat of the South Vietnamese government through communist aggression.

5. Remind the American people of our commitment to South Vietnam and ask them to continue to support all measures necessary, while avoiding the dangers raised by mobilizing the reserves and shifting to a war economy.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

- The failure of the British and French to honor their commitment to Czechoslovakia in 1938 led Hitler in 1939 to believe that Britain and France would not defend Poland from a German invasion.

- Japanese aggression in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor was not deterred by U.S. warnings because we failed to back up our words with action.

- Credible commitments to Western Europe backed up by our willingness to employ all military measures necessary contained Soviet expansion after 1947.

- Carefully controlled military escalation and credible threats convinced the Soviet Union in 1962 to reverse its aggressive policies in Cuba and to withdraw its missiles.

ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 2

- By carefully controlling the escalation of our military involvement in Vietnam, we will minimize the risk of greater Soviet or Chinese participation in the conflict.

- Without more American troops in South Vietnam, the Saigon government will soon be overthrown by the communists.

- By reaffirming our commitment to South Vietnam and taking additional steps to back up our commitment, we are bolstering American honor, prestige, and credibility.

- U.S. determination and overwhelming military superiority will force the North Vietnamese to abandon their campaign to take over South Vietnam by armed aggression, thus cutting off the insurgent movement in the south from its main source of support.

OPTION 3

LIMIT OUR INVOLVEMENT AND NEGOTIATE A WITHDRAWAL

The potential risks of increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam now clearly outweigh any likely benefits of our presence. The military situation has deteriorated to the point that even massive American troop reinforcements cannot guarantee victory. The present government in Saigon is an unstable military dictatorship that has little popular support. South Vietnam is not essential to the national security of the United States. Moreover, the fall of South Vietnam to the communists would not inevitably mean that the rest of Southeast Asia would follow, like a row of mindless dominos. Each nation in this region has a unique political, economic, and strategic position. Many will continue to remain strong U.S. allies regardless of the fate of Vietnam. Our most important global interests, which lie in Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere, will be threatened if our economic and military resources are committed to a costly, and probably hopeless, land war in Asia. The longer that we are in Vietnam and the larger our involvement, the greater the stakes become and the more difficult it will be to withdraw. U.S. prestige and credibility would be seriously damaged by such an outcome.

History warns us of the difficulty of fighting a successful war against insurgents in the jungles and rice paddies of Asia. Even though the French had overwhelming military superiority, they were unable to suppress the revolt of the Vietminh, and eventually were forced by pressures at home to retreat in a humiliating manner. Experts on guerrilla warfare maintain that defeating an insurgency requires a 10 to 1 advantage in troops. For the United States, that means a commitment of more than 500,000 soldiers in South Vietnam for many years. In 1954, U.S. army commanders and congressional leaders argued convincingly against sending in American forces to stave off the French defeat in Indochina. Their arguments hold true today. Even the proponents of increased American military involvement offer no prospect of a quick victory. The steady decline of public support during the Korean War demonstrates that the American people are unlikely to tolerate a long, costly, indecisive war for limited objectives in Asia again. Finally, the Strategic Bombing Survey done by the U.S. Army in Germany after World War II showed that even massive bombing by itself does not destroy the will to fight in a determined opponent. North Vietnam, which is less industrialized than Germany was, is less likely to bend before such an air campaign. In fact, bombing might heighten the country's resolve. Pentagon studies have estimated that U.S. bombing missions cost the United States $10 for $1 worth of damage to North Vietnam.

No additional American forces beyond those already promised should be sent to Vietnam. The bombing campaign against North Vietnam should be reduced, as should be the scope of U.S. military operations in the south. Meanwhile, we should seek a negotiated settlement that would enable us to gradually reduce our presence in South Vietnam. We must cut our losses, but not at the cost of seriously damaging American honor and credibility,

Since the initial U.S. commitment to South Vietnam in the mid-1950s was clearly linked to the development of a free, democratic Vietnam, the American people will understand that the present military dictatorship in Saigon no longer can justly claim that commitment. How can American soldiers be expected to die for a government that the South Vietnamese people themselves are reluctant to fight for? The United States has done all that could reasonably be expected. Gradually withdrawing now represents not a retreat, but a realistic reappraisal of a situation that has changed drastically since our commitments in 1956-1961.

The "Containment" Policy in Asia

Scott Long in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*. Reprinted with permission from Star Tribune, Minneapolis.

FROM THE RECORD

excerpt from United States Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum, May 26, 1954:

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff desire to point out their belief that, from the point of view of the United States, with reference to the Far East as a whole, Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives and the allocation of more than token U.S. armed forces in Indochina would be a serious diversion of limited U.S. capabilities."

excerpt from President Dwight Eisenhower's letter to President Diem of South Vietnam, October 1, 1954:

"I am accordingly instructing the American Ambassador to Vietnam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your government can serve to assist Vietnam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain."

excerpt from a campaign speech of President Lyndon Johnson, fall 1964:

"We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves."

excerpt from C.I.A. Director John McCone's April 2, 1965 memorandum:

I feel that the latter decision [to escalate the American ground role in the South] is correct only if our air strikes against the North are sufficiently heavy and damaging really to hurt the North Vietnamese....The strikes to date have not caused a change in the North Vietnamese policy of directing Viet Cong insurgency, infiltrating cadres and supplying material. If anything, the strikes to date have hardened their attitude....On the other hand, we must look with care to our position under a program of slowly ascending tempo of air strikes. With the passage of each day and each week, we can expect increasing pressure to stop the bombing. This will come from various elements of the American public, from the press, the United Nations and world opinion. Therefore time will run against us in this operation and I think the North Vietnamese are counting on this."

excerpt from Under Secretary of State George Ball's memorandum of July 1, 1965:

"The South Vietnamese are losing the war to the Viet Cong. No one can assure you [President Johnson] that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms, no matter how many hundred thousand white, foreign (U.S.) troops we deploy. No one has demonstrated that a white ground force of whatever size can win a guerrilla war — which is at the same time a civil war between Asians — in jungle terrain in the midst of a population that refuses cooperation to the white forces (and the South Vietnamese) and thus provides a great intelligence advantage to the other side....Should we limit our liabilities in South Vietnam and try to find a way out with minimal long-term costs? The alternative — no matter what we may wish it to be — is almost certainly a protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces, mounting U.S. casualties, no assurance of a satisfactory outcome, and a serious danger of escalation at the end of the road....Once large numbers of U.S. troops are committed to direct combat, they will begin to take heavy casualties in a war they are ill-equipped to fight in a non-cooperative if not downright hostile countryside. Once we suffer large casualties, we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement

will be so great that we cannot — without national humiliation — stop short of achieving our complete objectives. Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives — even after we have paid terrible costs...We [should] seek a compromise settlement which achieves less than our stated objectives and thus cut our losses while we still have freedom of maneuver to do so...

"I strongly urge the following program....complete all deployments already announced...but decide not to go beyond a total of 72,000 men represented by this figure. Restrict the combat role of the American forces....Continue bombing in the North but avoid the Hanoi-Haiphong area and any targets nearer to the Chinese border than those already struck....In any political approaches so far, we have been the prisoners of whatever South Vietnamese government that was momentarily in power. If we are ever to move toward a settlement, it will probably be because the South Vietnamese government pulls the rug out from under us and makes its own deal or because we go forward quietly without advance prearrangement with Saigon. So far we have not given the other side a reason to believe there is any flexibility in our negotiating approach. And the other side has been unwilling to accept what in their terms is complete capitulation. Now is the time to start some serious diplomatic feelers looking towards a solution based upon some application of a self determination principle...that would permit the Viet Cong some hope of achieving some of their political objectives through local elections or some other device....Before moving to any formal conference we should be prepared to agree once the conference is started: the U.S. will stand down its bombing of the North, the South Vietnamese will initiate no offensive operations in the South, and the DRV [North Vietnam] will stop terrorism and other aggressive action against the South....On balance, I believe we would more seriously undermine the effectiveness of our world leadership by continuing the war and deepening our involvement than by pursuing a carefully plotted course towards a compromise solution....We have not persuaded either our friends or allies that our further involvement is essential to the defense of freedom in the cold war. Moreover, the [more] men we deploy in the jungles of South Vietnam, the more we contribute to a growing world anxiety and mistrust."

summary of private remarks by Clark Clifford, unofficial presidential advisor and friend to President Johnson, July 25, 1965:

"We must not create an impression that we have decided to replace the South Vietnamese and win a ground war in Vietnam....What happened in Vietnam is no one person's fault. The bombing might have worked, but it hasn't....A failure to engage in an all-out war will not lower our international prestige. This is not the last inning in the struggle against communism. We must pick those spots where the stakes are highest for us and we have the greatest ability to prevail...[I] don't believe we can win in South Vietnam. If we send in 100,000 more, the North Vietnamese will meet us. If the North Vietnamese run out of men the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win this war. If we don't win [then], it is a catastrophe. If we lose 50,000 men it will ruin us. Five years, billions of dollars, 50,000 men, it is not for us. At the end of the monsoon [season], quietly probe and search out with the other countries — by moderating our position — to allow us to get out. [I] can't see anything but catastrophe for my country."

excerpt from February 1966 testimony of George Kennan, architect of the "containment" policy toward the Soviet Union, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which he repeated the criticisms that he had voiced the previous year:

"If it were not for the considerations of prestige that arise precisely out of our present involvement, even a situation in which South Vietnam was controlled exclusively by the Vietcong, while regrettable, and no doubt morally unwarranted, would not, in my opinion, present dangers great enough to justify our direct military involvement....I think it should be our government's aim to liquidate this involvement just as soon as this can be done without inordinate damage to our own prestige or to the stability of conditions in that area....I have a fear that our thinking about this whole problem is still affected by some sort of illusions about invincibility on our part, that there is no problem in the world which we, if we wanted to devote enough of our resources to it, could not solve."

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Halt any further buildup of American forces in Vietnam beyond those already promised.

2. Reduce the bombing against North Vietnam and the scope of American military operations in South Vietnam.

3. Seek a negotiated settlement with Hanoi that would permit U.S. forces to gradually turn over their duties to the South Vietnamese.

4. Distance itself from the present Saigon government.

5. Assure the American people that our original commitment to a free democratic South Vietnam has been fulfilled and, given the nature of the present military dictatorship in Saigon, is no longer binding.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

- The disastrous French experience in Indochina showed the difficulty of a non-Asian army defeating a native guerrilla force with popular backing.

- The French Indochina War also illustrated the domestic political unrest that such a war can generate in a democratic society.

- Successful anti-guerrilla campaigns require substantial troop commitments and a long-term effort.

- The Korean War demonstrated that the American people will not support a drawn-out, costly, inconclusive war for limited objectives.

ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 3

- The loss of American lives and the expenditure of American resources will be halted if we disengage.

- Even with massive American military involvement, the war in South Vietnam is likely to be unwinnable.

- U.S. strategic interests elsewhere are endangered by an overcommitment of American resources in a country which is not essential to our security.

- U.S. interests in East Asia can be protected even if South Vietnam falls under communist control.

- Continued involvement in Vietnam will raise the stakes and make disengagement in the future far more difficult and costly.

OPTION
4

UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL, PULL OUT NOW!

The present involvement of the United States in the Vietnamese civil war is contrary to American values and interests. Originally motivated by high ideals, we now find ourselves spending American lives and resources to keep in power an unpopular, undemocratic, military dictatorship. We have no right to impose upon the people of Vietnam a government of our choosing. The present government in Saigon is kept in power only by the support of the United States. The Vietnamese must be allowed to decide their own destiny. We have no strategic interests in Vietnam which would require even minimal American military involvement. To assume that we know what is best for a people halfway across the world having completely different traditions and values, and to employ our overwhelming military might to impose our solution on them, is unjustified, arrogant, and immoral. The United States cannot preserve its democratic values at home while it is betraying them abroad. Continued involvement in this mistaken effort will demonstrate to the world and to the American people the folly of this policy.

One of the fundamental principles upon which this nation was built was the determination to avoid involvement in the internal disputes of other nations, even when parties to these disputes were invoking the cause of freedom and liberty. Our stature in the world has been built upon our example, not our standing armies. An examination of the history of Indochina reveals that the current conflict is the continuation of the national struggle which began against the French in 1946. In assuming the role that the French abandoned in 1954, we are seen by the Vietnamese as another white, imperialistic power seeking to impose its will. Just as the French were forced to accept a humiliating defeat after a long and costly struggle, so we run a terrible risk if our present policy is not reversed. By ignoring its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, the United States is undermining the principle of rule by law, which forms the cornerstone of the United Nations system erected by the United States and its allies after World War II. The United States, as well as North Vietnam, is guilty of violating this principle. The terrible costs of international lawlessness were tragically revealed in World War II and in the Korean War. If we continue on this misguided course, the world will hold us to blame for the tragedy that will follow. Three times this century, American boys have been called upon to fight and die under the banner of freedom and world peace. We cannot ask them to die in the jungles of Asia for a corrupt dictatorship that even the Vietnamese people are unwilling to fight for.

The U.S. government should immediately halt the deployment of additional American troops to Vietnam, and should begin the withdrawal of those forces currently there. The responsibility for resolving the conflict in Vietnam should be brought before the United Nations, where it belongs. Our economic and military aid to the Saigon government, which feeds the continued carnage in this unhappy country, should also be reduced.

The American government should explain to the American people that our values, security concerns, and responsibility to world peace and order do not permit the continued support of what has become an increasingly repressive government. Americans will understand that the principles which have guided this nation from its birth are more important than a poorly conceived policy based on an incomplete understanding of a complex situation thousands of miles away.

Paul Szep in *The Boston Globe*. Reprinted courtesy of *The Boston Globe*.

FROM THE RECORD

excerpts from Secretary of State John Quincy Adams' speech on July 4, 1821:

"Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America's heart, her benedictions, and her prayers. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and by the sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standards of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force....She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit."

excerpts from Senator John Kennedy's speech regarding the French war in Indochina, April 6, 1954:

"Despite any wishful thinking to the contrary, it should be apparent that the popularity and prevalence of Ho Chi Minh and his following throughout Indochina would [in the case of a negotiated peace] cause either partition or a coalition government to result in eventual domination by the Communists....To pour money, material, and men into the jungles of Indochina without at least a remote prospect of victory would be dangerously futile and self-destructive....I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, 'an enemy of the people' which has the sympathy and covert support of the people."

excerpts from General Matthew Ridgway's recollections written in 1956 regarding the proposed U.S. intervention in Indochina in 1954:

"I felt it was essential therefore that all who had any influence in making the decision on this grave matter should be fully aware of all the factors involved....The area they found [Indochina] was practically devoid of those facilities which modern forces such as ours find essential to the waging of war....We could afford an Indochina, we could have one, if we had been willing to pay the tremendous cost in men and money that such intervention would have required, a cost that, in my opinion, would have eventually been as great as or greater than that we paid in Korea. In Korea we had learned that air and naval power alone could not win a war and that inadequate ground forces cannot win one either. It was incredible to me that we had forgotten the bitter lesson so soon. We were on the verge of making that same tragic error. That error, thank God, was not repeated....[W]hen the day comes for me to face my Maker and account for my actions, the thing I would be most humbly proud of was the fact that I fought against, and perhaps contributed to preventing, the carry out of some hare-brained tactical schemes which would have cost the lives of thousands of men. To that list of tragic accidents that fortunately never happened I would add the Indo-China intervention."

excerpts from Senator Wayne Morse's speech, August 5, 1964:

"In our time a great struggle...is going on in the world between freedom on the one hand and the totalitarianism of communism on the other. However, I am satisfied that that struggle can never be settled by war. I am satisfied that if the hope of anyone is that the struggle between freedom and communism can be settled by war, and that course is followed, both freedom and communism will lose, for there will be no victory in that war. Because of our own deep interest in the struggle against communism, we in the United States are inclined to overlook some of the other struggles which are occupying others. We try to force every issue into the context of freedom versus communism. That is one of our great mistakes in Asia....We say we are opposing communism there, but that does not mean we are advancing freedom, because we are not...

"There is no hope for permanent peace in the world until all the nations...are willing to establish a system of international justice through law, to the procedures of which will be submitted each and every international dispute that threatens the peace of the world....For ten years the role of the United States in South Vietnam has been that of a provocateur, every bit as much as North Vietnam has been a provocateur. For ten years the United States, in South Vietnam, has violated the Geneva agreement of 1954....The American effort to impose by force of arms a government of our own choosing upon a segment of the old colony of Indochina has caught up with us....[We have] marched in the opposite direction from fulfilling our obligations under the United Nations Charter. ..

"Our charges of aggression against North Vietnam will be greeted by considerable snickering abroad. So too will the pious phrases of the resolution about defending freedom in South Vietnam. There is no freedom in South Vietnam....We are defending a clique of military generals and their merchant friends who live well in Saigon, and who need a constantly increasing American military force to protect their privileged position....We have threatened war where no direct threat to American security is at stake...A war in Asia should be recognized as unthinkable....We cannot justify the shedding of American blood in that kind of war in Southeast Asia. France learned that lesson. France tried to fight it for eight years and with 240,000 casualties. The French people finally pulled down the French government and said they had had enough. I do not believe that any number of American conventional forces in South Vietnam, or in Asia generally, can win a war...

"Our moral position, which we claim as leader of the free world, will be undermined and our capacity for calling others to account for breaches of the peace will be seriously compromised....The 'fight now, negotiate later' line is based on the wholly illusory assumption that Red China and North Vietnam will do what we refuse to do — negotiate when they are losing....We need the world with us....Whoever fights a war without taking the matter to the United Nations is in violation of the charter, whether that party started the fighting or not....The day of the Westerner is finished in Asia, just as much as in Africa. And it no longer matters whether the Westerner is French, Dutch, British, or American. The pressure will always be against us and against our front in South Vietnam."

excerpts from Senator Ernest Gruening's speech, August 6, 1964:

[I urge] that the United States get out of South Vietnam....American security is not involved, the allegation that we are supporting freedom in South Vietnam has a hollow sound....I do not consider this is our war and I feel that all Vietnam is not worth the life of a single American boy. We inherited this putrid mess from past administrations, and we should make every effort to disengage ourselves."

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Halt any further deployment of U.S. military forces to South Vietnam.

2. Begin to withdraw those U.S. military forces already in South Vietnam.

3. Reduce our economic and military assistance to the military dictatorship in Saigon.

4. Call on the United Nations to take responsibility for resolving the conflict in Vietnam.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

- The decision of U.S. leaders before World War II to avoid involvement in the internal disputes of other nations was a foundation of our country's peace and prosperity.

- As the national revolutions that have taken place in Asia since the end of World War II have indicated, attempts by Western countries to impose their power in the region inevitably triggers a fierce backlash.

- Violation of the rule of law by resorting to force, regardless of provocation, has led to increased international lawlessness and threats to world peace.

- The defeat of the French in 1954 indicated that a white, Western army, even with numerical superiority, cannot defeat insurgents supported by the people in Southeast Asia.

ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 4

- Withdrawing from Vietnam immediately means that no more American lives or resources will be lost.

- A U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam will lessen the chances of confrontation with China and the Soviet Union.

- It is immoral for the United States to use its military power to impose its values on an unreceptive people halfway across the globe.

- The rule of law will be strengthened internationally if the United States ceases its military actions in Vietnam and refers the problem to the United Nations.

- It is impossible for the United States to achieve through any means its current objectives in Vietnam.

Considering Your Option

Instructions: It is early summer, 1965. Your group has been called upon to advise President Johnson concerning the situation in Vietnam. Your assignment is to persuade the president that the United States should adopt your option. After reading your option and the supporting materials, answer the questions below from the viewpoint of your option. This worksheet will help you prepare your presentation. Keep in mind that your group's presentation may include only information that was available in the summer of 1965.

1. According to your option, what is the nature of the conflict in Vietnam?

2. According to your option, what are the United States' interests and concerns in this area?

3. According to your option, what should be the objectives of the United States in Vietnam?

4. According to your option, what lessons from history should shape our policy toward Vietnam?

5. According to your option, what specific actions should the United States take?

6. In summary, why should the United States adopt your option?

Ten-Day Lesson Plan

Note: Teachers are encouraged to modify the lesson plan to suit the needs and abilities of their students.

Homework: Before beginning the unit, students should read "Historical Background: 1946-1954." In addition, students should complete the questions contained in "Study Guide — Historical Background: 1946-1954."

DAY ONE

The French Indochina War and the roots of U.S. involvement

Objective: This discussion will introduce students to the origins of the Vietnamese revolt against French colonial rule and to the objectives of the United States in East Asia after World War II.

1. Using the maps provided at the beginning of the unit, ask students to identify the locations of Indochina, Japan, Korea, and China. Review student responses to the study guide questions for "Historical Background: 1946-1954." Using the map on page 4, review the battlefield situation on the eve of the Geneva Conference.

2. Divide the class into six groups. Explain that on Day Two students will be simulating the Geneva Conference of 1954. Five of the groups will represent each of the major participants at the conference, while the sixth group will function as recorders.

3. Give each of the participant groups the "Background Briefing" for one of the nations involved in the conference, as well as "Instructions — Geneva Conference, 1954." Distribute "Instructions to the Recorders" to the sixth group.

Homework: Students in the participant groups should read the background briefing material and prepare for the simulation by completing "Instructions — Geneva Conference, 1954."

DAY TWO

The 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina

Objective: This role play will clarify the conflicting interests of the participants at the Geneva Conference of 1954.

1. Call on each participant group to organize its presentation and select a group spokesperson. Allow each group three to five minutes to present its position and objectives. At the conclusion of the presentations, ask the recorders to summarize the positions of the five groups. If time permits, encourage the groups to challenge the presentations of other countries.

2. Ask students to predict the likely outcomes of the conference. How did the U.S. position differ from that of the French and the British? How might these differences have influenced the final settlement? What was the likely role of the Chinese in determining the outcome?

Homework: Students should read carefully "Historical Background: 1954-1964" and complete "Study Guide — Historical Background: 1954-1964."

DAY THREE

The early stages of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the Tonkin Gulf resolution: discussion

Objective: This discussion will introduce students to the general policies and specific actions that shaped the early U.S. commitment to Vietnam and the background to the Tonkin Gulf resolution.

1. Ask students to contrast the proceedings of the Geneva Conference role play with the actual outcome of the conference. What issues were resolved in 1954? Why did the conference fail to lay the foundation for a long-term political settlement? Review student responses to the study guide questions for "Historical Background: 1954-1964." Make sure that students understand the concept of incremental decision-making and the gradual progression of the U.S. commitment in Vietnam.

2. Instruct students to read "Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Plan" and "Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Incident." Call on them to share their responses to the discussion questions with the class. Ask students to imagine that they were members of Congress at the time of the Tonkin Gulf crisis. How would they have voted on President Johnson's request for a resolution to authorize U.S. retaliation against North Vietnam?

DAY FOUR

The Tonkin Gulf resolution and the options for U.S. policy in Vietnam: discussion, organization, and preparation

Objective: Students will analyze the events that produced the Tonkin Gulf resolution and the background to the watershed year of 1965.

1. Instruct students to read "Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Request" and "Case Study — The Tonkin Gulf Resolution: The Action." Call on them to share their responses to the discussion questions with the class.

2. Review "Summer 1965 — The Four Options" with students, calling on them to answer the discussion questions. Emphasize that the summer of 1965 was one of the most decisive turning points for U.S. policy in Vietnam.

3. Inform students that on Day Five they will be simulating a critical debate on U.S. policy in Vietnam held during the summer of 1965. Form eight groups (four groups in smaller classes) of three to four students. Assign an option to each group. Students should follow the instructions in "Considering Your Option" to develop their group presentations. Note that in addition to presenting a case for its own option, each group should be prepared to criticize the three competing options.

Homework: Students should read their assigned option and complete "Considering Your Option" to prepare for the simulation.

DAY FIVE

Options for U.S. policy in Vietnam: debate

Objective: This simulation will introduce students to a range of strategies for U.S. policy in Vietnam as they analyze the four options.

1. Call on each option group to organize its presentation and select a group spokesperson. Allow each group three to five minutes to present its option. At the conclusion of the presentations, encourage the groups to challenge the positions of the competing options.

Homework: Students should review the four options, and complete "Focusing Your Thoughts" and "Crafting Your Option."

Extra challenge: In addition to completing "Focusing Your Thoughts" and "Crafting Your Option," students should draft a one-to-two-page position paper to President Johnson advocating their own options.

DAY SIX

Crisis and consensus

Objective: Students will articulate individual policy options and join their classmates in developing a consensus through debate and discussion.

1. Divide the class into groups of six to eight students. Make sure that each group contains students who advocated each of the four options on Day Five. Explain that each group is charged with the task of developing a joint recommendation on U.S. policy in Vietnam. Remind students that their recommendation should apply to the summer of 1965, and that they should consider only information available to the decision-makers at the time.

2. Instruct students to initially recommend the policy options they have developed to their fellow group members. At the same time, the group as a whole should fashion a collective policy for the United States in Vietnam. If a consensus does not emerge quickly within a group, suggest that students identify the shared values that could serve as the foundation of a joint recommendation. Note that a consensus does not require unanimity, merely a strong majority. Ten minutes before the end of the class period, call on each group to report on its consensus recommendation.

Homework: Students should review "U.S. Involvement in Vietnam — 1962-1975" and "The War Unfolds — 1965-1975," and read one of the news stories from the collection of news articles. Each student should prepare a two-to-three-minute presentation for Days Seven and Eight based on his or her news story.

DAYS SEVEN AND EIGHT

The war unfolds — 1965-1975

Objective: Students will examine the widening U.S. involvement in Vietnam after 1965, the domestic reaction, and the U.S. disengagement.

1. Proceeding chronologically, call on students to report individually on their assigned news stories. Ask presenters to explain how the events of their assigned news story relate to the events of earlier stories. What periods contain particularly dramatic developments? Which stories would have had the greatest impact on American public opinion?

Homework: Students should read "Values and the Vietnam War" and consider the questions that follow.

DAY NINE

Tangible and intangible values

Objective: Students will explore the differences between tangible and intangible values and analyze the costs associated with war.

1. Ask students to offer personal examples to illustrate the distinction between tangible and intangible values. What values are most likely to enter into foreign policy decisions?

2. Ask students to consider the key decision points for U.S. policy in Vietnam — 1954, 1961, 1965, and 1969 — in terms of tangible and intangible values. Call on students to identify, based on the information available to U.S. decision-makers at the time, the intangible values at stake for each critical juncture and to anticipate the cost in tangible values. Were the decisions made by U.S. leaders reasonable? How did the intangible values at stake change from 1961 to 1969?

3. Call on students to present their answers to the questions at the end of "Values and the Vietnam War."

Homework: Students should read "The Songs of War" and answer the questions in the introduction. (The class may be divided into groups, with the members of each group being responsible for reviewing a few songs.)

DAY TEN

Songs of the Vietnam War

Objective: Students will consider the human dimension of the war by discussing the lyrics of Vietnam-era songs.

1. Call on students to offer their interpretation of each of the songs presented. (Recordings of the songs could be used to demonstrate how music reinforces the message of the lyrics.) Ask students to organize the songs by themes and types. Compare and contrast the American songs with those composed by French and Vietnamese singers.

Homework: Students should read "Applying the Lessons of Vietnam" and answer the questions in the introduction for each lesson presented.

Optional Lesson: Oral History and the Vietnam Experience.

Background Briefing — Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Vietminh)

The day of liberation for the Vietnamese people is finally here! After a century-long struggle, the Vietnamese people, led by the Vietminh, have defeated decisively the forces of colonialism and imperialism. Total military victory and national independence is within our reach.

For the past eight years, the Vietnamese people have been fighting single-handedly the French imperialists and their lackeys in Vietnam. Shortly after our leader, Ho Chi Minh, raised the banner of independence in September 1945, we requested that the United States and Britain support the idea of Vietnamese independence and "take steps necessary for the maintenance of world peace which is being endangered by French efforts to reconquer Indochina." Our pleas for Western and United Nations assistance went unheeded. We were forced to fight on our own against an enemy with superior forces and superior weaponry. The courage of our men and women and the superior tactics of our leaders have turned the tide of battle and brought about the historically inevitable triumph of the people and the humiliation of the imperialists. Despite the huge amounts of money and war materials that the United States has sent the French and that were used to kill and maim the Vietnamese people and keep them in bondage, the imperialists are now on the run and know that their days are numbered.

Our objective is the total expulsion of the colonial forces and the establishment of communist governments in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In addition, steps must be taken to prevent the warmongering Americans from establishing counter-revolutionary bases in the area. Such provocative actions by the chief imperialist power would threaten the safety of the people's governments and endanger world peace. While the French and British colonial powers have reluctantly recognized the triumph of the people's movements in Southeast Asia, the United States insists upon denying the justness and reality of the people's victory. American obstructionism in Asia has prevented the Chinese People's Republic from taking its rightful place among the sovereign nations of the world, and American threats have prevented Western nations from recognizing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since it was proclaimed in 1950.

France must immediately recognize the full sovereignty and independence of Vietnam and the full sovereignty and independence of Pathet Lao [communist forces in Laos] and Khmer [communist forces in Cambodia]. All foreign troops must be withdrawn from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos immediately and free elections organized to form a democratic government in each country. Vietnam must not be divided. The Vietnamese people are one. Our Chinese brothers have been encouraging us to accept a temporary military settlement that would leave southern Vietnam still under the control of the imperialist lackeys. We object to such a resolution, but if necessary to bring about an end to the French presence in Indochina, we would reluctantly accept it. The Chinese People's Republic has been our faithful ally throughout this long struggle and we must respect the opinions of its leaders. However, assurances must be given that elections will be held soon to provide for the unification of the Vietnamese people under a truly representative people's government. While a military solution may precede a political settlement, the latter must not be put off indefinitely. The goal of a free, unified Vietnam that we are about to achieve on the battlefield must not be lost at the conference table in Geneva.

FROM THE RECORD

speech by Ho Chi Minh declaring Vietnamese independence from the French, September 2, 1945:

"'We hold the truth that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America....The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states 'All men are born free and with

equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights...'

"Nevertheless, for more than eight years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice. In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty....For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France....The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

"We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam."

excerpt from comments by Ho Chi Minh, fall of 1945:

"[The Americans] are only interested in replacing the French....They want to reorganize our economy in order to control it. They are capitalists to the core. All that counts for them is business."

press release by representatives of Vietminh, January 6, 1947:

"THE VIETNAM STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. At a time when the democratic powers have just emerged from a long war against Fascism, Vietnam, victim of French colonial aggression, must still defend itself with arms. It is no longer necessary to emphasize the misdeeds and crimes of that particular form of colonialism, its constant and deliberate attempt to poison an entire people with alcohol and opium, its policy of exploitation, pressure, and obscurantism imposed upon Vietnam by a handful of colonialists and from which the French people themselves have derived no real benefit. Suffice it to recall that since the French conquest more than three-quarters of a century ago, the people of Vietnam have never ceased striving to regain their independence. The long list of uprisings and revolts, although harshly quelled, have marked this painful period with interruption and have demonstrated the invincible strength of our national spirit...

"VIETNAM APPEALS TO THE WORLD. The era of colonial conquest and domination is over. Vietnam is firmly resolved to the very end in her struggle for her most sacred rights, *viz.*, the territorial integrity of her country and her political independence."

statement of Vietminh strategy, issued during the early years of the war:

"The general strategic line to be followed by our resistance is protracted warfare. An agricultural country, we are brought into conflict with an industrial country. With rudimentary weapons we are fighting an enemy equipped with aircraft, armour, warships....We know how to preserve and increase our strength, season our army and give military training to our people, if we learn to wage war while carrying our combat operations, we shall obtain what we lacked at the beginning, and though weak at first, we shall become strong. By decimating, harassing, demoralizing the enemy, we shall turn the tide. Losing his initial superiority, the enemy, a victor at the start, will be vanquished in the end.

"If we prolong the war, our strength will increase; that of the enemy will dwindle, the poor morale of his troops will sink ever deeper, the serious financial problems saddled on him will be ever more aggravated. The more we fight on, the closer national unity will grow and the stronger the support of the world democratic forces. On the other hand, in France itself, the enemy will be ever more hampered by the popular movement against war and for democracy; the revolutionary upsurge in his colonies will force him to scatter his forces; his isolation in the international arena will worsen. To get at this result, we need time. Time is for us."

Permission granted for duplication

excerpts from statements by Pham Van Dong, head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) delegation, May 1954:

"[The DRVN proposes] recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of Viet-Nam over the whole territory of Viet-Nam....Conclusion of an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of Viet-Nam, Khmer [Cambodia] and Pathet Lao [Laos]....Organization of free, general elections in Viet-Nam, in Khmer and Pathet Lao in order to form a single government in each country....Conferences will take all measures to guarantee the free activity of patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations. No foreign intervention will be allowed....A complete and simultaneous cease-fire over all the territory of Indochina by all the armed forces — land, sea, and air — of the belligerent parties....Complete cessation of all introduction into Indochina of new military units...of all kinds of arms and munitions...establishment of a control [commission] to assure the execution of the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities...

"It is common knowledge that in order to reestablish peace in Indochina, it is necessary to put an end to the provision by the United States of arms and munitions to Indochina, to recall the American missions, advisers, and military instructors, and to cease all intervention by the United States, in whatever form, in the affairs of Indochina."

Background Briefing — France

The political and economic survival of France are at risk because of the situation in Indochina. The economic costs of the war, which has been going on for eight years, have been draining the French treasury and preventing our full economic recovery from the ravages of the war against Germany. Nearly 2 trillion francs have been spent on this war. This is more than twice the amount of total aid received from the U.S. Marshall Plan. Our officer corps has been decimated, with more than 8,200 killed, and our military colleges cannot graduate enough officers to replace those killed and disabled. We are unable to fulfill our commitments to the defense of Europe because of the burdens of this war. Our political life has been disrupted and governments have fallen because of public discontent. Pierre Mendes-France, our new premier, has pledged to bring the war to a close within thirty days or he will resign. Only the sending of French draftees to Indochina can guarantee the security of our forces already there, and we know that the French people will not tolerate this. While the dangers of allowing this strategic area to fall under communist control are very great, and the loss of this valuable part of the French empire cannot help but inflict deep and lasting wounds, we can no longer continue the struggle. Our nation's future is at stake!

The century-long role of France in Indochina should never be a source of shame for our country. On the contrary, we have brought the blessings of modern administration, medicine, economic development, and, of course, French culture and values. All Vietnamese, not just those who have been enlightened by French education, have benefited from our guidance. Long before the Americans recognized the dangers of communist aggression in Asia, we were fighting to halt the encroachment of communism into Southeast Asia. Until 1950, we fought this battle alone, suffering the unjustified criticisms of our allies. Although the United States since June 1950 has contributed part of the costs of the war, the blood shed in Indochina has been French, not American. Ambiguous, last-minute offers from the United States to send ships, warplanes, and perhaps even troops have come too late. French rule in Indochina was fatally undermined much earlier by American attitudes, and we cannot but suspect that the United States intends to take our place in this resource-rich area of the world. The tragic outcome of this war cannot, however, dim the glory achieved by the French soldiers, administrators, and educators who have contributed so much to Indochina during the century of enlightened French guardianship.

Our objectives are to end the financial and human costs of the war, to limit the gains of the communists, and to retain as much French influence in the area as possible. We fear that if the communists at this conference achieve the total victory they have been unable to gain on the battlefield, then all of Southeast Asia will be lost to communism. The smaller states will be unable to resist the pressure from their communist neighbors. French economic and political interests can be protected by limiting the area ceded to communist control and by strengthening those areas that can be denied to the communists. The conference in Geneva should limit itself to the resolution of the military situation and defer to the future the resolution of the more difficult political issues.

The aggressive appetites of the Vietminh and the Chinese communists who have supported them will not be satisfied for long with a partial victory. Now that the eyes of the British and Americans have been opened to this threat, we hope that collective actions can be taken to check the spread of communist influence. In particular, it is necessary that the United States, which has made no secret of its reluctance to attend this conference and participate in its deliberations, commit itself to guaranteeing the settlement which is achieved here. Only the Americans have the resources to stabilize the situation.

An immediate cease-fire and regrouping of the respective forces is necessary, followed by the exchange of prisoners of war. A temporary military division of Vietnam along the 18th parallel could be made. We wish, in addition, to preserve an enclave in the Red River delta, near Hanoi. Vietnamese who wish to relocate south and thus avoid being subjected to communist control should have that right. Elections to settle the political future of all of Vietnam should be held no sooner than eighteen months after the cease-fire to allow the ravages of war to heal.

excerpts from article by Jacques Soustelle, a leading spokesman for the French Gaullist party, October 1950:

"The United States has been fighting in Korea since June 26, 1950, and France has been fighting in Indochina since December 19, 1946. The two conflicts differ from each other in many ways. However, each clearly has a place in the same strategic and political complex. They share a common factor. Each results from the expansion of Soviet power toward the sea, pushing its satellites ahead, and exploiting against the West the nationalism, even xenophobia of the Asiatic masses....When the Japanese themselves were forced to acknowledge their defeat, there were no more French cadres, no organized French force, either in Asia (near Indochina) or in the interior of Indochina itself. This combination of circumstances accounts for the importance suddenly assumed by the Viet Minh....The Viet Minh also received arms, and in large quantities, from the Japanese when the latter realized that they had lost....The Viet Minh made its appearance, proclaimed the "Democratic Republic of Viet Nam" and set about entrenching itself and digging in at Tonkin before the French could return...

"Too often there is a tendency to believe that France had done little or nothing for Indochina and the Indochinese. In fact, the economic development of Indochina had made great progress since the beginning of this century....It cannot fairly be denied that this progress has benefited the many, and not only an oligarchy of French origin....France did not neglect her duties towards the Indochinese in the cultural field....And it is to be remarked that these French educational activities gave large scope to primarily Indochinese subjects....France did all that was in her power for the people of Indochina...except to open to them the road to self government...[because] the French carried their respect for the historical and local structure to excess....I believe that no one, even the Indochinese themselves, could have done for Indochina what France has done. But a tragic inadequacy in the growth of the political structure of the country created discontent within the new native elite. This Communism has been able to exploit...

"The Viet Minh is the pawn which the Kremlin [Soviet leaders] is moving up on the Indochinese chessboard....Ho Chi Minh [has] acted as an agent of a global policy, the double purpose of which was and remains, first, to weaken France in Europe by forcing her to deflect a large part of her forces and resources to the Asian theatre; and second, to open a first breach in the Pacific front....The war in Vietnam has cost France considerable losses in manpower and an enormous financial burden....This unsettles French public opinion and seriously undermines the country's strength and influence in Europe...If the front held by France in Indochina were destroyed, the position of opponents of Communism in Malaya [Malaysia] and the Philippines would quickly become untenable....It would be an Asiatic Munich. The conflict in Indochina is only a local manifestation of the resistance of peoples on the periphery of Asia to the Soviet expansion from the heart of the continent."

excerpts of remarks made by French President Auriol, May 6 and October 25, 1952:

"We are the supporting pillar of the defense of the West in Southeast Asia; if this pillar crumbles, Singapore, Malaysia and India will soon fall prey to Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] ...The defense of freedom in Indochina has practically cost us twice what we received under that [Marshall] plan and in the form of military aid, 1600 billion francs as compared to 800 billion.... And for what did our officers, our non-commissioned officers and our soldiers sacrifice themselves? For our interests? No, but for a cause which is not ours alone: for the defense of the young, associated and friendly states [Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia] to which we brought prosperity and to which we gave independence in order to defend freedom in Asia and thereby to defend freedom and security in Europe and the world....In view of this, who can still be surprised about the reactions of this country when it is treated unjustly, when one overlooks its sacrifices or seems to minimize them, when its warnings are clearly ignored?"

excerpts from French Premier Pierre Mendes-France's speech on July 22, 1954, the last day of the Geneva Conference, in which he explained the position his government took at the conference:

"The nightmare is over....I do not want anyone to have illusions concerning the contents of the agreements....The text is sometimes cruel, because it sanctions facts which are cruel; it was no longer possible that it should be otherwise....If the war were to continue our [forces] would be placed in a perilous position unless it received substantial reinforcements within a short time; the dispatch of conscripts [draftees] then became a pressing necessity unless an armistice could be very rapidly concluded....[The] results are without a doubt the best that could be hoped for in the present state of things....The liberation of prisoners was the subject of special provisions, and I do not have to tell you how much importance the French delegation attached to them.

"A right of option was proclaimed and organized, so that all Vietnamese, regardless of their permanent or present residence, would be able freely to return to the zone of their choice. It was provided...by a unanimous decision of the nine participants, that the settlement would have only a temporary character, and that the unity of the country would be reestablished as quickly as possible through general elections under international control....The situation has on the administrative and territorial level the advantage of being clear. The evacuation by our forces of certain zones in the North has its exact counterpart in the evacuation of the Central and Southern zones occupied by the Viet Minh. The obstacles to a good administration of the country south of the 17th parallel are thus removed. Vietnam [the southern zone] can now look forward to prompt economic revival....North of the demarcation line we face a new situation which is not without difficulties and risks. It seems to me, however, that our adversaries of yesterday, introduced in our schools to our way of thinking, could not remain insensitive to it [French ideas and culture]...

"The Geneva agreements obviously sanction losses already suffered or losses made inevitable by the deterioration of the military situation....But they leave intact the possibilities which exist for France to remain in the Far East and to play her role there....Our mission in Indochina is thus not over, but will undoubtedly take on new aspects....It [the settlement] will be evident in an inestimable gain — by sparing the lives of our young men — and it will enable us to reinforce our military positions in Europe and in Africa....Too long indeed were our Allies kept under illusions with regard to the potentialities of our military actions and the objectives we were able to attain. No doubt since the beginning of the year, the realities, the sad realities, have contributed to enlighten them....Even among the Americans who were not inclined *a priori* to approve our policies, a realistic view of things prevailed. They realized that not only had the worst been avoided, but that waging war in the Far East was a heavy liability for European policy and in a more general manner for all Western policy."

Background Briefing — People's Republic of China

The hopeless situation of the French in Indochina clearly indicates that Western imperialism is dead in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese people are about to join their Chinese brothers in establishing a true people's democracy led by the Communist Party. To protect their hard-won triumph and to ensure that the security of the People's Republic of China is not endangered, the war in Indochina should be brought to an end. The People's Republic of China strongly supports the idea of peaceful coexistence in Asia.

The leaders of the Vietnamese people's democratic forces have correctly looked to the experience of the Chinese people who, led by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong, achieved victory over the forces of Western imperialism and their puppets just five years ago. The strategists of the Vietminh have followed the tactics developed by Chairman Mao to combat the better-armed and often numerically superior forces of colonialism. By cleverly luring the enemy to extend its operations beyond its central lines, then quickly surrounding it with superior forces and cutting off its lines of retreat, the inspired and valiant people of Vietnam have recently achieved long-deserved victories in their eight-year struggle. The fate of the colonial aggressors at Dienbienphu has shown that the historically inevitable triumph over imperialism is now within reach. Since late 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, we have supported the struggle of our Vietnamese brothers with encouragement, tactical advice, supplies, and, most recently, with military equipment. We extended diplomatic recognition to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in early 1950. While our level of aid has not approached the huge amounts of military equipment supplied by the American warmongers to the French imperialists, our aid has made possible the recent victories of the Vietminh. We have not committed troops from the Chinese People's Army to the struggle because they have not been needed.

It is now time to end the struggle against the forces of imperialism in Asia. As Chairman Mao has taught, it is proper and necessary in the long struggle against imperialism to conclude temporary peace agreements with the enemy. Such a peace will enable the democratic forces to consolidate their gains and to prepare for the next phase. For the present, the forces of imperialism must permanently evacuate the northern part of Vietnam and recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the legitimate government there. The establishment of a democratic [communist] government will increase the security of the Chinese people by pushing the forces of the warmongering Americans and their lackeys further away from the territory of China.

Although the French apparently have recognized that their colonial adventure in Southeast Asia has ended, the American government continues to pursue its reactionary, aggressive policies against the peoples of Asia. Recent hints that the United States may send aircraft, ships, and armies to continue the fruitless war against the people in Vietnam — a war the United States has financed for the past few years — demonstrate how dangerous and irrational the imperialists can be when they sense that the people are on the verge of triumph. Fortunately, the French and British imperialists have shown no interest in these adventuristic U.S. threats. While the Vietminh can justify the liberation of all of Vietnam, for tactical reasons it is necessary that they accept for the moment control only over the northern half of their country. Unification with the people of southern Vietnam can be accomplished by peaceful means within a short period of time. Above all, care must be taken not to provoke the Americans to dangerous, irresponsible actions, such as their invasion of the Democratic Republic of Korea four years ago.

The People's Republic of China calls for an immediate cease-fire in Indochina, the return of all prisoners of war, and the immediate withdrawal of French forces from Indochina. Guarantees that would prevent the Americans from establishing a counter-revolutionary, colonial outpost in southern Vietnam are necessary. While we believe that the conflicts in Laos and Cambodia, and the legitimacy of the Pathet Lao [communist forces in Laos] and Khmer Issarak [communist forces in Cambodia], should be addressed at the conference in Geneva, in the interests of achieving peace we will

encourage our Vietnamese brothers to withdraw their forces from Laos and Cambodia. Since future problems in Asia cannot be resolved without the rightful participation of the Chinese people, the U.S. government must recognize the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China and allow us to rightfully take our seat in the United Nations.

FROM THE RECORD

excerpt from Chairman Mao Zedong's book On the Protracted War, *written in 1938 and republished in 1951:*

"Because the enemy force, though small, is strong (in equipment and the training of officers and men) while our own force, though big, is weak (only in equipment and the training of officers and men but not in morale), we should, in campaign and battle operations, not only employ a big force to attack from an exterior line a small force on the interior line, but also adopt the aim of quick decision. To achieve quick decision we should generally attack, not an enemy force holding a position, but one on the move. We should have concentrated, beforehand and under cover, a big force along the route through which the enemy is sure to pass, suddenly descend on him while he is moving, encircle and attack him before he knows what is happening, and conclude the fighting with all speed. If the battle is well fought, we may annihilate the entire enemy force or the greater part or a part of it. Even if the battle is not well fought, we may still inflict heavy casualties."

excerpts from articles by Chairman Mao Zedong, January and April, 1940:

"In the international situation the 'heroes' in the colonies and semi-colonies must either stand on the side of the imperialist front and become part of the force of world counter-revolution or stand on the side of the anti-imperialist front and become part of the force of world revolution. They must stand either on this side or on the other, for there is no third choice...

"After we have repulsed the attack...and before a new one [begins], we should stop at the proper moment and bring that particular fight to a close....Then we should on our own initiative seek unity with the [enemy] and, upon his consent conclude a peace agreement....Herein lies the temporary nature of every particular struggle."

excerpt from published remarks by Chairman Mao Zedong, August 11, 1949:

"Disrupt, fail, disrupt again, fail again, till their doom — that is the logic of imperialism and all reactionaries in the world. They will certainly not go against this logic. This is a Marxist law. We say: 'Imperialism is very vicious.' That means that its fundamental nature cannot be changed. Till their doom, the imperialist elements will not lay down the butcher's knife, nor will they ever turn into Buddhas..."

excerpts from speeches by Communist Party spokesman Liu Shao-ch'i, November 3, 16, and 23, 1949:

"[The Chinese working class needs] to shoulder the grave responsibility of assisting the working class and working people of capitalist countries and especially of colonial and semi-colonial countries in Asia and Australia. The victorious Chinese working class cannot and must not evade this honorable international responsibility....The path taken by the Chinese people in defeating imperialism and its lackeys and in founding the People's Republic of China is the path that should be taken by the peoples of the various colonial and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and people's democracy....The war of national liberation in Viet Nam has liberated 90 percent of her territory....The national liberation movement and the people's democratic movement in the colonies and semi-colonies will never stop short of complete victory. Their struggles are entirely righteous....The great victory of the Chinese people has set them the best example."

excerpts from official Chinese publications, August 26 and September 25, 1950: [Note: While these articles refer specifically to the situation in Korea, Vietnam is also on China's border and has traditionally been a focus of Chinese security concerns.]

"The barbarous action of American imperialism and its hangers-on in invading Korea not only menaces peace in Asia and the world in general but seriously threatens the security of China in particular. The Chinese people cannot allow such aggressive acts of American imperialism in Korea. To settle the Korean question peacefully, first the opinions of the Korean people and next the opinions of the Chinese people must be heard...

"No Asian affairs can be solved without the participation of the Chinese people. It is impossible to solve the Korean problem without the participation of its closest neighbor, China...North Korea's friends are our friends. North Korea's enemy is our enemy. North Korea's defense is our defense. North Korea's victory is our victory.

"...We Chinese people are against the American imperialists because they are against us. They have openly become the arch enemy of the People's Republic of China by supporting the people's enemy, the Chiang Kai-shek clique, by sending a huge fleet to prevent the liberation of the Chinese territory of Taiwan, by repeated air intrusions and strafing and bombing of the Chinese people, by refusing new China a seat in the U.N., through intrigues with their satellite nations, by rearing up a fascist power in Japan, and by rearming Japan for the purpose of expanding aggressive war. Is it not just for us to support our friend and neighbor against our enemy? The American warmongers are mistaken in thinking that their accusations and threats will intimidate the people of China."

excerpts from articles in People's Daily, April 21 and May 9, 1954:

"We do not commit aggression against others and [we] are firmly opposed to aggressive action by anyone else....We advocate peace and oppose war. But we certainly will not take it lying down if someone else's armed aggression is directed against us....[The American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] has proposed sending aircraft carriers and planes to participate directly in the Indochina war, and [Vice President Nixon] has actually shouted about dispatching American ground forces to Indochina....The time is ripe for ending the war in Indochina."

Background Briefing — The United States

The survival of the free nations of Southeast Asia is endangered today. The United States will not allow another nation to fall under the control of international communism. Should part of Indochina be placed permanently under communist control, such a regime, taking its directions from the Soviets and China, will seek to subvert its neighbors. Just as a row of dominos will topple if one is knocked down, so the young and vulnerable free nations of Southeast Asia will fall to the communists. The security of the United States and its vital interests in this area require that this be prevented. Should we fail, the free world would suffer a major blow and the forces of communist aggression would be strengthened.

The United States is deeply sympathetic to the attempts by people who have been ruled by European colonial powers to achieve their national independence. Because of our own heritage, we can identify with their aspirations. However, in Southeast Asia the forces of nationalism have been subverted by international communism. The Vietminh are not fighting for Vietnamese freedom and independence, they are merely pawns of the Soviet and Chinese communists. No matter how hard they may attempt to conceal it, they are aided and directed by Moscow and Beijing. The ugly face of communist aggression in Asia was revealed by the unprovoked invasion of South Korea by its communist neighbor to the north. At that time, the United States took a firm stand to halt the spread of communism in Asia, and we strongly urge that the Western powers take a firm stand in Indochina today to halt communist aggression there. Since 1950, we have been supplying the French with economic and military aid to fight the communists. We have spent nearly $3 billion of our taxpayers' money to finance this war. Unfortunately, France's reluctance to pledge full independence for the people of Indochina has been an obstacle in its struggle to defeat the Vietminh. More than 150,000 Vietnamese were drafted to fight with the French forces, and all but 9,000 successfully avoided the call to service, an indicator of the weakness of native loyalties for the French.

While the recent French loss of the garrison at Dienbienphu is a serious blow to the anti-communist struggle, its impact should not be overestimated. To defeat the communists, the United States is willing to send American planes, ships, and ground troops to Indochina, provided the British and French agree to a joint effort. The Republican Party's platform in 1952 pledged that the United States would not sanction any further territorial gains through aggression by the communists. This administration intends to stand by that commitment. We hope that our allies in London and Paris share these sentiments.

The real evil force behind communist aggression in Southeast Asia is Red China. This bandit regime, imposed by force of arms on the Chinese people, is a puppet government, responding to its master in Moscow. We refuse to recognize the legitimacy of this illegal regime and we will not deal with it in any manner that would imply approval or acceptance. Its treachery and aggressive designs were revealed to the world in Korea. We will continue to support the legitimate government of China, currently in temporary exile in Taiwan, and we will block any attempt by the Soviets to give Red China a seat in the United Nations. After all, only three years ago the United Nations branded Red China as the aggressor in Korea.

If we cannot persuade our allies to join us in a united defense against the present communist aggression in Indochina, we will seek to minimize the territorial gains that the Vietminh will achieve at this conference. The principles that we insist upon are: that the Vietminh withdraw their forces from Cambodia and Laos and the independence of these countries be preserved; that at least the southern half of Vietnam remain free; that there be no provisions which would restrict the right of southern Vietnam to defend itself by obtaining military material and advisers from foreign countries; that there be no political provisions which would risk the loss of southern Vietnam to communist control; and finally, that the eventual unification of a free Vietnam by peaceful means not be precluded. If the negotiated settlement does not conform to these basic principles, we shall disassociate ourselves from this conference and return to Washington. In addition, we intend to take immediate steps to construct a mutual security defense organization

(South East Asia Treaty Organization) which will halt further communist aggression in Asia just as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has halted further communist aggression in Europe.

FROM THE RECORD

excerpt from testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk before Congress, June 1950:

"This [the Indochina war] is a civil war that has been in effect captured by the [Soviet] Politburo and, besides, has been turned into a tool of the Politburo. So it isn't a civil war in the usual sense. It is part of an international war."

excerpt from speech by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, March 29, 1954:

"Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted, but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now, if we dare not to be resolute today."

excerpts from letter of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to President Dwight Eisenhower, April 22, 1954:

"The situation here [Paris] is tragic....There is, of course, no military or logical reason why loss of Dien Bien Phu [Dienbienphu] should lead to collapse of French will....It seems to me that Dien Bien Phu has become a symbol out of all proportion to its military importance."

remarks by Vice President Richard Nixon to reporters, April 17, 1954:

"More men are needed and the question is where to get them. They will not come from France, for France is tired of the war....The French, however, while slow in training the native soldiers, resent the idea that the United States or others should send men to do the job. More difficult is the job of spirit. Encouragement must be given to fight and resist. Some say if the French get out, the Vietnamese will fight with more spirit, because they would be fighting for their independence.

"But the Vietnamese lack the ability to conduct a war by themselves or govern themselves. If the French withdrew, Indochina would become Communist-dominated within a month. The United States as a leader of the free world cannot afford further retreat in Asia. It is hoped that the United States will not have to send troops there, but if this government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch troops. Therefore, the United States must go to Geneva and take a positive stand for united action by the free world....This country is the only nation politically strong enough at home to take a position that will save Asia. Negotiations with the Communists to divide the territory would result in Communist domination of a vital new area....It should be emphasized that if Indochina went Communist, Red pressure would increase on Malaya [Malaysia], Thailand, and Indonesia and other Asian nations. The main target of the Communists in Indochina, as it was in Korea, is Japan. Conquest of areas so vital to Japan's economy would reduce Japan to an economic satellite of the Soviet Union."

excerpt from memorandum summarizing discussion between President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles regarding situation in Indochina, May 7, 1954:

"The U.S. should (as a last act to save Indochina) propose to France that if the following five conditions are met, the U.S. will go to Congress for authority to intervene with combat forces: a) grant of genuine freedom for Associated States; b) U.S. take major responsibility for training indigenous forces; c) U.S. share responsibility for military planning; d) French forces to stay in the fight and no requirement of replacement of U.S. forces; e) action under UN auspices."

excerpts from instructions sent by President Dwight Eisenhower to U.S. delegation in Geneva:

"You will not deal with the delegates of the Chinese Communist regime, or any other regime not now diplomatically recognized by the United States, on any terms which imply political recognition or which concede to that regime any status other than that of a regime with which it is necessary to deal on a de facto basis in order to end aggression or the threat of aggression....The position of the United States...is that of an interested nation which, however, is neither a belligerent nor a principal in the negotiations.

"The United States is not prepared to give its express or implied approval to any cease-fire, armistice, or other settlement which would have the effect of subverting the existing lawful governments...or which otherwise contravened the principles stated in (4) above [these people should not be amalgamated into the Communist bloc of imperialistic dictatorship]."

excerpts from joint letter sent by President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Churchill to French government, June 29, 1954:

"The United States Government/His Majesty's Government would be willing to respect an agreement which 1) Preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom. 2) Preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam....3) Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam [South Vietnam] any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers. 4) Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control. 5) Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means... 6) Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement."

statement issued by spokesman for United States State Department, July 11, 1954:

"The United States will not become a party to any agreement which smacks of appeasement. Nor will we acknowledge the legitimacy of Communist control of any segment of Southeast Asia."

statement by United States delegation spokesman, July 18, 1954:

"If the agreements arrived at here are of a character which my government is able to respect, the United States is prepared to declare unilaterally that...it will refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them, and would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern."

Background Briefing — Britain

It is the view of His Majesty's Government that two major issues are at stake in Southeast Asia today. First, the war in Indochina must be halted before it ignites a larger conflict, potentially engulfing much of East Asia. Second, the tide of communist aggression in Southeast Asia must be turned back. If the war is not brought to a close, the British colonies of Malaysia and Hong Kong, as well as the states of the British Commonwealth of Nations in the area (Australia, New Zealand, and India) could be affected. The British government has neither the resources nor the desire to become involved in a land war in Asia. Nevertheless, it is necessary that concerted actions be taken to halt the spread of communism in Asia.

Great Britain has had vital national interests in Asia for more than 100 years. Unlike our French allies, who seem incapable of shedding their outmoded colonial mindset, the British government has adjusted to the rising tide of genuine nationalism in Asia. India, the crown jewel of the British empire, was granted its independence shortly after the last war. Where clear-cut aggression has taken place, as in Korea, the British people have taken their place alongside their American allies in defeating the forces of aggression. To protect and maintain its interests in the area, His Majesty's Government has recognized the necessity of dealing with governments with whom we do not share fundamental values. Unlike the Americans, we see no value in ignoring the obvious existence and power of the People's Republic of China and we have opened diplomatic relations with Beijing. It is our belief that conflicts between governments can best be resolved when the parties speak to one another. Thus, we have agreed to chair, with the Soviet Union, this conference in Geneva in the hopes that a settlement acceptable to the parties involved can be reached. We would like to see the American government adopt a more constructive attitude in participating in the deliberations of the conference and in seeking a reasonable resolution to the crisis. We must all be willing to compromise for the cause of world peace.

U.S. attempts to continue the war and to expand its scope are, in the opinion of our government, unwise and dangerous. We will not join any military efforts to expand the war by sending British forces into the area, and we strongly urge the United States not to embark upon this road. The Vietminh, fighting under the banner of Vietnamese nationalism, have enjoyed widespread support among the people of Vietnam. Moreover, the Vietminh army has shown on the battlefield that it is a formidable opponent. On the other hand, the gains which the communists have achieved on the battlefield should, to the extent possible, be limited in the settlement to be negotiated. His Majesty's Government and the United States agree that an acceptable settlement should conform to the following principles: that the Vietminh forces evacuate Laos and Cambodia and that these countries be guaranteed their independence; that at least the southern part of Vietnam be kept non-communist; that no provisions be accepted that would substantially impair the ability of southern non-communist Vietnam to obtain military supplies and foreign advisers for its defense; that no political provisions permitting the extension of communist control over the southern part of Vietnam be included; and finally, that the possibility of eventual peaceful reunification of a free Vietnam be recognized. While wishing to see the temporary demarcation line dividing Vietnam be placed as far north as possible, we would agree to the 17th parallel. Elections should be held at least eighteen months in the future to allow the situation to stabilize.

The British government has already entered into preliminary discussions with the Americans for the purpose of establishing a South East Asia Treaty Organization to act as an Asian counterpart of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in halting the expansion of communism. We intend to commit our military resources to this effort and to encourage the participation of Commonwealth states in the area. While a line must be drawn in Asia, it is too late to include all of Indochina on the side of the non-communist countries.

excerpt from British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's memorandum to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, April 30, 1954:

"While we do not believe that a French collapse in Indo-China could come about as rapidly as the Americans appear to envisage, this danger reinforces the need to lay the foundations of a wider and viable defense organization for South-East Asia. We propose therefore that the United States and the United Kingdom should begin an immediate and secret joint examination of the political and military problems in creating a collective defense for South-East Asia."

excerpt from Prime Minister Winston Churchill's letter to President Dwight Eisenhower, June 21, 1954:

"I have always thought that if the French meant to fight for their empire in Indochina instead of clearing out as we did of our far greater inheritance in India, they should at least have introduced two years' [compulsory military] service, which would have made it possible for them to use the military power of their nation. They did not do this, but fought on for eight years with untrustworthy local troops, with French cadre [officers] elements important to the structure of their home army, and with the Foreign Legion, a very large proportion of whom are Germans. The result has been thus inevitable, and personally I think Mendes-France [the French premier], whom I do not know, has made up his mind to clear out on the best terms available. If that is so, I think he is right.

"I have thought continually about what we ought to do in the circumstances. Here it is. There is all the more need to discuss ways and means of establishing a firm front against Communism in the Pacific sphere. We should certainly have a S.E.A.T.O. [South East Asia Treaty Organization], corresponding to N.A.T.O. [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] in the Atlantic and European sphere. In this it is important to have the support of the Asian countries. This raises the question of timing in relation to Geneva.

"In no foreseeable circumstances, except possibly a local rescue, could British troops be used in Indo-China, and if we were asked our opinion we should advise against United States local intervention except for local rescue."

excerpts from a joint letter sent by Prime Minister Churchill and President Eisenhower to the French government, June 29, 1954:

"The United States Government/His Majesty's Government would be willing to respect an agreement which 1) Preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom. 2) Preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam....3) Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam [South Vietnam] any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers. 4) Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control. 5) Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means... 6) Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement."

excerpt from joint declaration issued by the British and American governments, June 30, 1954:

"We uphold the principle of self-government and will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire and are capable of sustaining an independent existence. We welcome the processes of development, where still needed, that lead to that goal. As regards formerly sovereign states now in bondage, we will not be party to any arrangement or treaty which would confirm or prolong their unwilling subordination. In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly."

excerpts from Prime Minister Winston Churchill's speech in parliament, July 12, 1954:

"It is hoped that should an acceptable settlement be reached on the Indo-China problem, means may be found of getting the countries which participated at the conference to underwrite it. We hope, too, that other countries with interest in the area might also subscribe to such an undertaking. This was the basis on which the idea was put to the Americans and it is one of the problems to be examined in Washington by the Anglo-United States Study Group set up as the result of our talks....The arrangements for collective defense in Southeast Asia will proceed whether or not agreement is reached at Geneva, though their nature will depend on the result of the conference."

Instructions — Geneva Conference, 1954

Instructions: You are representing your country at the Geneva Conference convened in May 1954 to deal with the crisis in Indochina. Countries attending are the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (representing the Vietminh forces fighting against French rule), France, the People's Republic of China (communist China), the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union (the conference co-sponsors), delegations representing the Associated States of Laos and Cambodia (both of which have royal governments under French protection), and the Republic of Vietnam (an anti-communist government allied with the French).*

The outcome of this conference will affect your country's vital interests and shape its future. Your country has invested much in the events leading up to this conference, and now you must achieve specific objectives to justify these investments of money, prestige, and in some cases, lives. To prepare a convincing presentation of your delegation's objectives, read the background briefing material carefully, then answer the following questions. Keep in mind that your presentation should be frank, honest, and direct.

1. What is at stake for your country in this situation?

2. What is your view of the historical events that led up to this crisis?

3. What are the principal objectives that your country wishes to achieve at the conference regarding Southeast Asia?

4. How do you perceive the actions and objectives of the other major participants?

5. What specific decisions, designed to achieve your objectives, will you try to persuade the other delegations to accept?

**The countries with the greatest influence in deciding the outcome of the Geneva Conference were the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, France, the People's Republic of China, the United States, and Britain. The Soviet Union, an active participant whose objectives were very close to those of the People's Republic of China, frequently played the role of mediator, attempting to reconcile the diverse objectives of the other participants. The remaining three delegations played a secondary role in shaping the settlement.*

Instructions to the Recorders

Geneva Conference, 1954

Instructions: Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter assigned to cover the Geneva Conference on Indochina. At the conclusion of the presentations by the principal delegations (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, France, the People's Republic of China, the United States, and Britain) you will be asked to compare and contrast the positions and objectives of these participants. Each delegation sees the situation in Indochina very differently and may appear to ignore other arguments and proposals. Representatives at international conferences often seek to establish bargaining positions or tailor their remarks for a wider audience, such as world opinion or their own countrymen. Unlike American domestic political debates, in which the participants expect to reach an agreement or consensus through give-and-take bargaining, on the international scene countries frequently expect to live with fundamental disagreements rather than compromise on issues which they see as vital to their national security. With this in mind, answer the following questions for each of the leading delegations:

1. What are the values at stake in Indochina as expressed by each delegation?

   a. Democratic Republic of Vietnam:

   b. France:

   c. People's Republic of China:

   d. United States:

   e. Britain:

2. How does each delegation view the historical events that led up to this conference?

   a. Democratic Republic of Vietnam:

   b. France:

   c. People's Republic of China:

   d. United States:

   e. Britain:

3. What are the principal objectives of each delegation?

a. Democratic Republic of Vietnam:

b. France:

c. People's Republic of China:

d. United States:

e. Britain:

4. What specific proposals is each delegation presenting to achieve these objectives?

a. Democratic Republic of Vietnam:

b. France:

c. People's Republic of China:

d. United States:

e. Britain:

5. Based on your understanding of the conflicting objectives of the participants, can you predict a likely outcome to the conference?

Focusing Your Thoughts

Instructions: You have had an opportunity to consider four options on U.S. policy in Vietnam in 1965. Now it is your turn to look at each of the options from your own perspective. Try each one on for size. Think about how the options address your concerns and hopes. You will find that each has its own risks and trade-offs, advantages and disadvantages.

Ranking the Options

Which of the four options do you prefer? Keep in mind that the beliefs you support most strongly should guide your choice. Rank the options below, with "1" being your first choice.

___ **Option 1: Americanize the War, and Fight to Win!**

___ **Option 2: Escalate Slowly and Control the Risks**

___ **Option 3: Limit Our Involvement and Negotiate a Withdrawal**

___ **Option 4: Unilateral Withdrawal, Pull Out Now!**

Beliefs

To help you clarify the values, perceptions, and assumptions upon which you will base your recommendations, consider carefully each of the following value statements and assumptions from the perspective of 1965. Rate each according to your personal beliefs and values.

1 = Strongly Support
2 = Support
3 = Oppose
4 = Strongly Oppose
5 = Undecided

___ Using U.S. military force to impose our values upon small nations is immoral, even if we think that our national interest is involved.

___ The ability of the United States to influence other nations will be greatly reduced if we do not live up to all of our commitments.

___ Whenever a country falls under communist control, U.S. national security is diminished.

___ American lives should not be risked in areas of the world that do not affect U.S. security directly.

___ Since the United States is the strongest democracy in the world, we have the primary responsibility for stopping aggression wherever it occurs.

___ Most of the conflicts in the world cannot be solved by American money, military power, or determination.

___ The United States should use its power to see to it that all nations enjoy the freedoms and political rights that Americans do.

___ To effectively deal with threats to our country's national interests, the U.S. government often needs to conceal policy decisions and actions from the American people.

Creating Your Own Option

You have been asked by President Johnson in the summer of 1965 to recommend a policy for the United States to adopt in Vietnam. You may borrow from one of the four options studied, combine ideas from two or three options, or suggest a new approach altogether. There is no right or wrong answer. You should strive to construct an option which is logical, consistent, and persuasive.

Name: _____

Crafting Your Option

Instructions: To prepare your option for presentation to the president, answer the following questions concerning your analysis of the situation and your policy recommendations. (Remember, this is the summer of 1965.)

1. What is the nature of the conflict in Vietnam?

2. What U.S. interests and concerns, if any, are at stake in Vietnam?

3. What should the U.S. objectives in Vietnam be?

4. What lessons from history have shaped your analysis?

5. What specific actions should the United States take to achieve these objectives?

6. What are the strongest arguments in favor of your option?

   a.

   b.

   c.

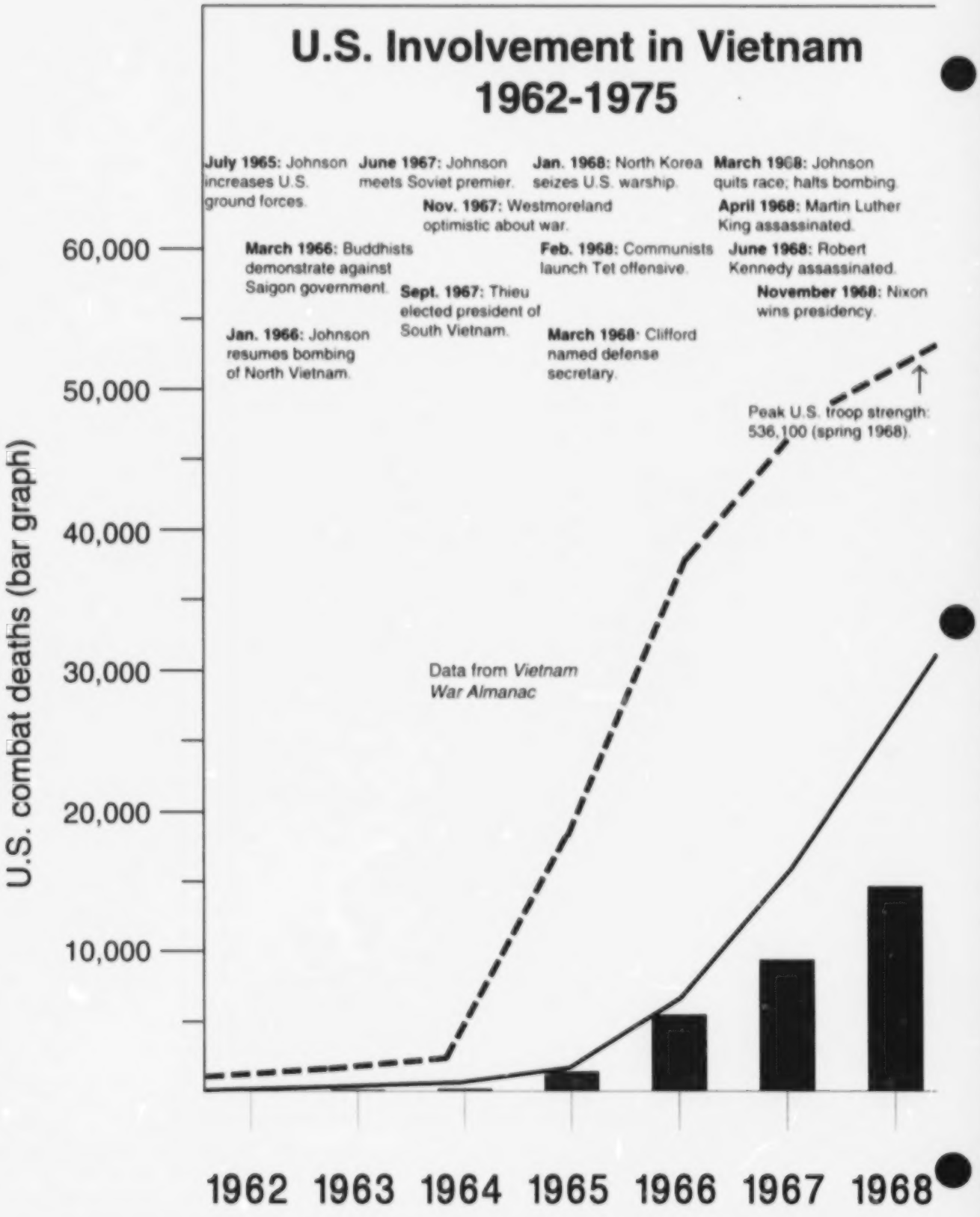
7. What arguments might opponents make against your option?

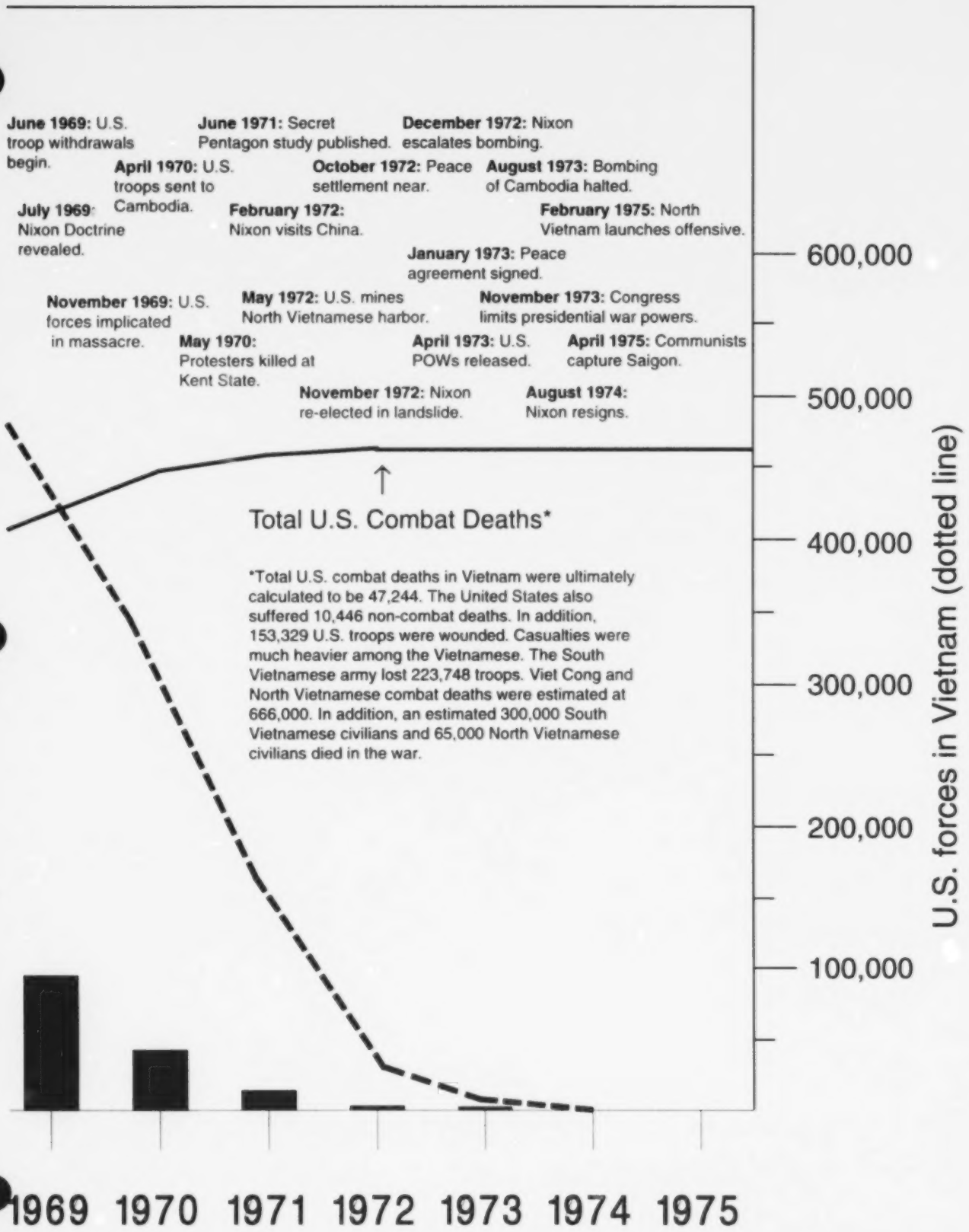
   a.

   b.

   c.

U.S. Involvement in Vietnam 1962-1975




June 1969: U.S. troop withdrawals begin.
April 1970: U.S. troops sent to Cambodia.
June 1971: Secret Pentagon study published.
December 1972: Nixon escalates bombing.
October 1972: Peace settlement near.
August 1973: Bombing of Cambodia halted.
July 1969: Nixon Doctrine revealed.
February 1972: Nixon visits China.
February 1975: North Vietnam launches offensive.
January 1973: Peace agreement signed.
November 1969: U.S. forces implicated in massacre.
May 1972: U.S. mines North Vietnamese harbor.
November 1973: Congress limits presidential war powers.
May 1970: Protesters killed at Kent State.
April 1973: U.S. POWs released.
April 1975: Communists capture Saigon.
November 1972: Nixon re-elected in landslide.
August 1974: Nixon resigns.
Total U.S. Combat Deaths*
*Total U.S. combat deaths in Vietnam were ultimately calculated to be 47,244. The United States also suffered 10,446 non-combat deaths. In addition, 153,329 U.S. troops were wounded. Casualties were much heavier among the Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese army lost 223,748 troops. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese combat deaths were estimated at 666,000. In addition, an estimated 300,000 South Vietnamese civilians and 65,000 North Vietnamese civilians died in the war.
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
U.S. forces in Vietnam (dotted line)
1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975

The War Unfolds: 1965-1975

Introduction

In late July 1965, President Johnson had reached a momentous decision. He approved the Pentagon's request for an additional 110,000 troops to go to Vietnam by the end of 1965 and agreed that another 100,000 to 200,000 troops would be sent during 1966. The increased troop levels and expanded air operations were to increase the monthly costs of the war from $6.5 million to about $20 million. Johnson remained concerned that the American public would oppose his decision. As a result, he rejected the suggestion that the reserves be called up. He also chose to make a national television appearance to announce his policy decision at mid-day, when the viewing audience was much smaller than during the evening. Johnson closed his remarks by stating:

"I have asked the commanding general, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. And we will meet his needs. We cannot be defeated by force of arms. We will stand in Vietnam."

Look carefully at "U.S. Involvement in Vietnam: 1962-1975." This timeline will assist you as you study the events that followed Johnson's 1965 decision and ultimately led to the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese army in April 1975. Each student in your class has been assigned a news story that corresponds with an event on the timeline. These stories are based on magazine and newspaper articles written during the war. You should read your assigned story and prepare a two-to-three-minute oral summary to be presented to the class.

To help you prepare your presentation, remember the "five W's" of good reporting: WHO did WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY? Note that the "WHY" question involves analysis and interpretation that go beyond the facts of the story. Use the space below to organize your thoughts.

Extra challenge: If you have the resources in your school library, find an article from *Newsweek*, *Time*, or a major newspaper that deals with the events of your assigned story.

July 1965: MASSIVE U.S. BUILDUP IN VIETNAM

WASHINGTON — Administration sources say a decision has been made to dramatically increase the U.S. troop commitment in South Vietnam. Currently at 72,000, the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam is expected to rise to 200,000 by the end of the year and up to 400,000 by next summer. This decision was made after a month-long examination of U.S. options in Southeast Asia by top-ranking administration officials. They concluded that if the U.S. commitment was not substantially increased, the beleaguered Saigon government would likely fall victim to the communist-led insurgency. President Johnson said more infiltration of troops and supplies from North Vietnam was causing the deteriorating situation. The president indicated that the United States had unsuccessfully approached the North Vietnamese communist regime several times with offers to go to the bargaining table, but all offers had been rejected. "It is going to take some tears and some blood," the president told his advisers.

The United States is now spending $6.5 million a month in Vietnam. That figure will soon rise to nearly $20 million a month. While the Pentagon has confirmed that it is studying the possibility of calling up the reserves and the National Guard, as well as extending tours of duty and increasing draft calls, no decision has been made on how the additional manpower requirements will be met. The military command said that new restrictions imposed on American newsmen in South Vietnam were justified by the need to protect American troops and to avoid compromising future operations.

While a number of administration officials have privately expressed reservations about dramatically raising the U.S. commitment, Johnson and his close advisers said that they had no choice, given the increased aggression from North Vietnam. The Pentagon estimates there are now 10,000 North Vietnamese regular troops in South Vietnam and about 100,000 Vietcong battling the South Vietnamese forces. In addition to the U.S. force, about 1,000 Australian and New Zealand troops are fighting the insurgents in South Vietnam. The administration said it hopes that this new signal of American determination will convince the communists that the United States will not allow their aggression to succeed.

Whether these new military moves by the United States can achieve their objectives is debatable. Several years ago, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of communist North Vietnam, told a reporter that "we held off the French for eight years, we can hold off the Americans for at least as long. Americans don't like long, inconclusive wars. This is going to be a long, inconclusive war."

January 31, 1966: BOMBING PAUSE BRINGS NO PEACE IN VIETNAM

WASHINGTON — U.S. bombing raids against North Vietnam, which had been suspended since last Christmas, will be resumed by orders of President Johnson. U.S. officials reported that U.S. efforts to induce the North Vietnamese to seek peace through negotiation were rejected by the communist regime. Instead, the North Vietnamese repeated their demand that the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the Vietcong, be recognized as "the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam." While administration officials were disappointed that the United States' peace gesture had not been accepted, they said they were pleased that this action had demonstrated the sincere desire of the United States for peace.

Extending the pause in bombing was rejected by the president because of the Pentagon's fears that Hanoi was taking advantage of the gesture to increase by tenfold the rate at which arms and equipment were being sent south, thereby putting American troops at risk. Nearly half of Senate Democrats opposed a resumption of the bombing. Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has described U.S. involvement in the war as "illegal," and has challenged the administration to seek approval of its war plans from Congress. Other congressmen have expressed fears that the increasing cost of the war effort will endanger the domestic programs that are at the heart of Johnson's Great Society agenda.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk met several times last week with Fulbright's committee to defend the administration's policies. He argued that the fate of Vietnam would have wide-ranging effects.

"A central issue in the dispute between the two leading Communist powers [the Soviet Union and China] today is to what extent it is effective — and prudent — to use force to promote the spread of Communism," Rusk said. "If the bellicose doctrines of the Asian Communists should reap a substantial reward, the outlook for peace in this world would be grim indeed!"

Pennsylvania Senator Joseph Clark said, "I am scared to death we're running into nuclear World War III," and Tennessee Senator Al Gore questioned whether the administration's actions were justified by the Tonkin Gulf resolution. Rusk pointed out that the resolution empowered the president "to prevent further aggression."

In earlier testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rusk had cited President Truman's containment speech in March 1947 ["I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"] and declared, "That is the policy we are applying in Vietnam." Columnist Walter Lippmann and former Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway have joined the critics in arguing that a continued pause should be the first step in a gradual U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

Support for the administration came from liberal Republican Senator Jacob Javits of New York. "The president," Javits said, "should have the support of the overwhelming majority of the American people if he decides to resume the bombing....Militarily, the situation is at least encouraging, the impact of our buildup is just beginning to be felt. Most South Vietnamese believe that the Viet Cong will be defeated — possibly in as little as two years...I believe the struggle in Vietnam is worthy of the United States. I believe it is worthy of the cause of freedom. I believe it needs to be waged and I believe it deserves the support of the liberals. South Vietnam is the zone of conflict in the struggle for the freedom of Asia, and those who see it as anything else are fooling themselves."

March 1966: ANTI-GOVERNMENT RIOTING HITS SOUTH VIETNAM'S CITIES

SAIGON — Anti-government protesters rampaged through the streets of Saigon and other major South Vietnamese cities last week, burning vehicles and chanting "Da Dao! Da Dao" ["Down with! Down with!"]. Led by Buddhist monks, communist sympathizers, and teenage gang leaders, the mobs were protesting a series of military governments that have ruled South Vietnam since the November 1963 coup that toppled President Ngo Dinh Diem. Although the Saigon government has attempted to avoid violent confrontations with the demonstrators, the generals say they must take firm action to quell the disturbances that are weakening the war effort against the communists. Using U.S. military transports to move their troops to the sites of unrest, the generals ordered troops to use clubs, tear gas, and other weapons to restore order.

In the northern areas around Danang and Hue, the protests are thought to be organized by a militant Buddhist monk, Tri Quang. Quang played a central role in the Buddhist demonstrations that preceded Diem's ouster. The Buddhist leaders of the movement are demanding amnesty for the rioters and the soldiers who aided them, the evacuation of South Vietnamese marines from Danang, where they had been sent to maintain order, and the establishment of an assembly to draw up a constitution within four to six months.

Meanwhile, in the air above Vietnam, the U.S. bombing campaign against North Vietnam — code named Operation Rolling Thunder — has continued to escalate over the past year. As many as 100 bombers a day have struck the north. The Pentagon estimates that this bombing has reduced the flow of supplies to communist forces in the south by 25 percent. Guam-based B-52 bombers, each carrying 30 tons of high explosives, are destroying Vietcong fortified bunkers within 35 miles of Saigon. These huge warplanes, originally designed to deliver nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union, are now becoming an effective weapon in destroying the guerrillas' jungle fortifications.

June 1967: PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND PREMIER KOSYGIN MEET AT SUMMIT

GLASSBORO, NEW JERSEY — U.S. and Soviet leaders met this week in the small New Jersey town of Glassboro. The summit meeting of the superpowers — the first since President Kennedy's confrontation with Premier Khrushchev in Vienna in 1961 — produced pledges from both sides to address the many problems dividing the two nations. Described by U.S. and Soviet participants as "a very good and very useful meeting," much of the discussion focused on the war in the Middle East that erupted earlier in the month. Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin argued that the United States and the Soviet Union must impose a settlement upon the warring parties in the area to prevent the spread of hostilities.

In contrast to Kosygin's call for a jointly imposed settlement in the Middle East, the Soviet leader argued that the United States must let the Vietnamese resolve their own problems without outside intervention. While the Soviets increased their level of material support to Hanoi early last year, they have been very cautious and seem determined to avoid becoming committed to the war. Confronted with a nuclear balance of terror, the Kremlin's leaders have apparently decided that the preservation of peace is more important than active support for "national liberation movements" in the Third World.

Although Kosygin's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in New York repeated long-standing Soviet criticisms of U.S. foreign policy, the productive tone of the personal meetings indicated that an important first step had been taken in addressing issues of common concern, such as nuclear proliferation and conflict in the Middle East.

September 1967: GENERAL THIEU ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM

SAIGON — Despite attempts by Vietcong terrorists to disrupt them, elections went ahead as planned in South Vietnam last week. General Nguyen Van Thieu, head of the ruling military government, won a clear victory with 35 percent of the vote in a field of 11 presidential candidates. Thieu's running mate, Air Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, who had previously served as prime minister, was elected vice president.

Thieu dismissed charges of election-rigging. "If I were to win the elections by foul means," Thieu said, "it would be an insult to myself."

While the 22 observers sent by President Johnson pronounced the election to be "fair," candidates who held pro-communist or neutralist views in the eyes of the governing military leaders were not permitted to run. Eighty percent of the voters went to the polls, where their identity cards were stamped, thus providing the government with a means of identifying those who had not participated in the elections.

Attorney Truong Dinh Dzu finished second in the polling for president, with 17 percent of the votes. Relatively obscure before the presidential campaign, Dzu called for negotiations with the Vietcong. Shortly after the election results were in, Thieu ordered Dzu arrested on illegal currency transaction charges.

While the South Vietnamese were voting, the Pentagon announced that August had seen the heaviest U.S. bombing yet of North Vietnam, with an average of over 150 sorties a day. Air Force General J.M. Philpott declared, "We're really doing the job now." The loss rate among U.S. planes bombing North Vietnam has dropped from 3.2 percent to 2 percent per mission.

November 1967: WESTMORELAND OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE WAR

WASHINGTON — U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Elsworth Bunker and General William Westmoreland, chief of U.S. military operations in Vietnam, expressed guardedly optimistic views on the progress of the war against the communists in South Vietnam. "Let's just keep on," Bunker urged. Westmoreland declared, "I have never been more encouraged in my four years in Vietnam."

Comparing the war to a knitted sweater that had been stretched thin, the general said, "In time, it will unravel. It is difficult to forecast when it will unravel. But if we relieve the pressure we prolong the war." Other administration spokesmen in recent weeks have said they can now see "the light at the end of the tunnel."

To support their optimistic projections, U.S. officials have noted that 2,500,000 people now live in communist-controlled areas of South Vietnam, compared to 4,000,000 in mid-1965. In addition, President Nguyen Van Thieu, who was elected in September, seems to be making progress in establishing a stable and honest government. U.S. intelligence analysts believe that the Vietcong are suffering from a lack of food, insufficient supplies, and a resulting drop in recruitment by more than 50 percent from 7,500 per month to less than 3,500 per month. Testimony from captured prisoners indicates that the communist troops may be growing tired of the war. The administration's policy of maintaining the pressure on North Vietnam through sustained bombing appears to be working. No increase in the number of American troops in Vietnam is forecast.

January 23, 1968: NORTH KOREA SEIZES U.S. WARSHIP

WASHINGTON — The U.S.S. *Pueblo* was boarded by North Korean naval forces and brought into Wonsan harbor while conducting an intelligence-gathering mission in international waters off the coast of North Korea. The crew of the *Pueblo* was reportedly paraded through the streets of Wonsan.

In Congress, the reaction to the seizure was strong. "An act of piracy," declared one Republican. Even Democrats who had criticized the administration's policies in Vietnam demanded swift action. "An act of war; the ship must be returned at once, with all Americans aboard. Our national honor is at stake," said Senator Frank Church, a vocal critic of the war in Vietnam.

Others urged caution until the full facts are disclosed. Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, vowed to get to the bottom of the incident. "I'll find out eventually — in two or three or four years. We're just now finding what took place in the Gulf of Tonkin [August 1964]." Meanwhile, Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon conceded that the *Pueblo's* mission had been a "tactical blunder" and questioned why the administration was engaging in such risky, provocative patrols when there is already a war going on in Southeast Asia.

President Johnson, who is very concerned about the major ground battle shaping up at Khe Sanh, near the demilitarized zone in South Vietnam, is reportedly weighing his options carefully. He ordered the mobilization of 15,000 Air Force and Navy reserves, but he is pursuing a peaceful solution through diplomatic channels. The Navy is still smarting from the embarrassment caused by its inability to send ships or planes to the assistance of the *Pueblo* during the two and one half hours that elapsed after the North Koreans first approached the warship and the time when it was anchored in Wonson harbor. The last time a U.S. warship was boarded by a hostile power occurred in 1807, when the British boarded and searched the U.S.S. *Chesapeake*. Some intelligence experts have expressed shock that apparently there were no emergency procedures in place to destroy the sensitive equipment and codes that the *Pueblo* routinely carried.

February 1968: COMMUNISTS LAUNCH HUGE OFFENSIVE DURING TET TRUCE

SAIGON — Unprecedented large-scale attacks against the cities of South Vietnam by sizeable Vietcong units have shattered the Tet (New Year) truce and produced the heaviest fighting of the war. In Saigon, a Vietcong squad penetrated and briefly held the compound of the U.S. embassy, perhaps the best guarded U.S. installation in the country. In the northern city of Hue, communist forces seized the city center and drove out the South Vietnamese army. The Vietcong flag is still flying over the citadel in Hue.

The insurgents have called for the population of the cities to rise up and support their efforts to drive out the Americans and the Saigon government. Nearly 400 American soldiers have died so far in what is shaping up to be a long, bloody battle to dislodge the Vietcong from their positions within South Vietnam's cities. Already over 15,000 communist casualties have been counted. This well-coordinated attack upon the urban centers marks a break from past Vietcong tactics, which have focused on the countryside. It also stunned the United States command here, which had been predicting that the war would wind down. U.S. officials had said that U.S. bombing of Vietcong supply routes and a drop in recruitment had undermined the ability of the Vietcong to mount large-scale military operations.

President Johnson tried to minimize the significance of the communist offensive. Denying that the attack had caught the administration by surprise, Johnson told reporters that the communists had failed to achieve their objectives.

"We have known for several months now that the communists planned a massive winter-spring offensive," the president said. "The stated purposes of the general uprising has failed. Communist leaders counted on popular support in the cities for their effort. They found little or none. It looks like somebody has paid a very dear price for the temporary encouragement that some of our enemies had. I do not believe that they will achieve a psychological victory."

Despite Johnson's comments, most observers believe that this latest turn of events has dealt a severe blow to the administration's hopes to bring about an early end to the conflict.

March 1968: CLIFFORD SWORN IN AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE; MAJOR TROOP INCREASE CONSIDERED

WASHINGTON — Clark Clifford, a prominent advisor to Democratic presidents since the administration of Harry Truman, was sworn in to replace outgoing Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Clifford, a Washington attorney, first served as President Truman's counsel in 1946 and played a key role in drafting Truman's famous March 1947 speech in which the containment policy was set forth. Clifford was also the architect of Truman's come-from-behind election victory in 1948. More recently, Clifford has been part of Johnson's "kitchen cabinet," a close circle of unofficial advisers and friends that the president has frequently called upon for counsel. Clifford reportedly strongly opposed the buildup of U.S. forces in Vietnam in 1965 and has long held serious reservations about U.S. policy in Southeast Asia.

Clifford's appointment comes at a critical juncture in U.S. policy toward the Vietnam War. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reportedly have endorsed a request from General Westmoreland for 206,000 additional troops. Regaining the momentum lost as a result of the communist Tet offensive will require a substantial increase in the number of U.S. combat troops, Westmoreland has said. Since the existing manpower resources of the services are already stretched thin, particularly in Europe, meeting Westmoreland's request would force President Johnson to mobilize the reserves or the National Guard. In addition to fueling domestic opposition to the war, the escalation would likely require a tax increase — a step that Johnson has so far avoided — to cover an estimated $10 billion increase in defense spending.

According to close associates, outgoing Defense Secretary McNamara had been questioning the wisdom of continuing the war effort that he himself had largely orchestrated.

March 31, 1968: JOHNSON BOWS OUT OF RACE AND HALTS BOMBING

WASHINGTON — The nation was caught by surprise tonight as President Johnson told a national television audience that he would not run for the presidency.

"I shall not seek and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your president," Johnson said.

Coming at the end of a major address in which Johnson revealed a peace overture to Vietnam, the president's statement recast the political landscape. Earlier this month, Johnson was nearly upset by Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. The primary results were seen as a showing of the Democratic electorate's discontent with the war in Vietnam. The announcement by New York Senator Robert Kennedy, the brother of the slain president, that he, too, would challenge Johnson for the nomination led observers to predict that a bruising political struggle could tear the Democratic Party apart. With Johnson out of the running, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who has avoided public criticism of the president's Vietnam policies but who is widely thought to doubt their effectiveness, will enter the presidential race.

The president also announced that he was halting the bombing over most of North Vietnam and authorized Ambassador Averell Harriman to open negotiations with Hanoi. Johnson has apparently rejected the request from the Pentagon to dramatically increase the U.S. troop commitment in Vietnam. Sources close to the White House indicate that Johnson's change of heart on Vietnam reflects the conclusions reached by Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford and a group of elder statesmen (known as the "wise men") who were called together to re-examine the U.S. position. Participating in these informal discussions were former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Under Secretary of State George Ball, former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, former Republican officials Douglas Dillon, John McCloy, and Robert Murphy, and retired generals Maxwell Taylor, Omar Bradley, and Matthew Ridgway. The consensus of this group was that the administration must find a way out of the war. Most of these men had previously supported the war effort, and in some cases had played a major role in planning the earlier stages of U.S. involvement.

April 4, 1968: MARTIN LUTHER KING ASSASSINATED

MEMPHIS — Black civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King was shot and killed last night outside of his Memphis motel room. The assassination comes a few days after President Johnson announced that he would not seek re-election, leading many Americans to question the direction of their country.

In response to the tragedy, President Johnson cancelled his plans to fly to Hawaii to confer with his advisers on the Vietnam War and instead called for a joint session of Congress to consider "constructive action instead of destructive action — in this hour of national need."

King's assassination triggered rioting and looting in New York, Chicago, Washington, Detroit, Baltimore, San Francisco, and Pittsburgh. National guard troops were dispatched to Washington and Chicago to halt the riots there. The wave of unrest is an ironic tribute to a man whose life was dedicated to the non-violent pursuit of justice.

Since the late 1950's, King helped organize and lead the movement to achieve racial justice in America. Influenced by the non-violent philosophy of the 19th century American philosopher Henry Thoreau, and the Indian activist Mahatma Ghandi, King had campaigned tirelessly to break down barriers of discrimination and prejudice. "I have a dream," King said in one of his most famous speeches, "that one day this nation will rise up and live up to the true meaning of its creed...that all men are created equal....If America is to become a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring!"

Recently, King had become more outspoken in his opposition to the war in Vietnam, arguing that it was immoral and that its costs were crippling the civil rights program and the war on poverty.

June 5, 1968: ROBERT KENNEDY KILLED AFTER PRIMARY VICTORY

LOS ANGELES — Senator Robert Kennedy, brother of the slain president, was gunned down shortly after learning of his victory in the California Democratic primary. Kennedy's triumph in California probably would have led the New York senator to the Democratic presidential nomination.

Kennedy was killed by a bullet fired at point-blank range by Sirhan Sirhan, a Jordanian national, who had been waiting for him in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel. Appearing on national television after the assassination, President Johnson called for an end to the traffic in guns and appointed a commission to study the causes of violence in American society. While disturbed at this latest act of violence to rock the nation this year, Johnson declared, "It would be just as wrong and just as self-deceptive to conclude from this act that our country itself is sick, that it has lost its balance, that it has lost its sense of direction, even its common decency."

Senator Kennedy had broken openly with the administration in March over its Vietnam policies and had campaigned actively against the war. He had succeeded recently in pulling ahead of anti-war activist Senator Eugene McCarthy, whose near victory over the president in the New Hampshire primary in March had influenced Johnson's decision not to seek re-election. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who has avoided most of the head-to-head primary battles, is expected to seek to win the delegates pledged to Kennedy.

November 5, 1968: NIXON WINS NARROW VICTORY WITH 43 PERCENT OF VOTE

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Richard Nixon won the presidency today in a narrow victory over Democratic Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Nixon's victory margin was less than 500,000 votes out of about 100 million cast. Third-party candidate George Wallace of Alabama received 13 percent of the total vote. While the Democrats lost the White House, they retained majorities in both the House and the Senate. Thus, Nixon will be the first U.S. president elected in the 20th century to face a Congress controlled by the opposition.

As a candidate, Nixon said that a "military victory" in Vietnam is no longer possible and claimed to have a "secret plan" for ending the war, although he did not reveal specific details about his intended policies. Vietnam was a divisive issue within the Democratic Party. The bitter debate over Vietnam at the party's August convention illustrated a clear split between those who favored a complete cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam and the "de-Americanization" of the war, and those who favored a continuation of the Johnson administration's course. While polls suggested that Johnson's decision during the last week of the campaign to halt all bombing of North Vietnam probably narrowed the gap between Humphrey and the Republican candidate, in the end it was not enough. Nixon now faces the most difficult challenge of his 25-year political career — to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam and heal the wounds caused by the war.

June 1969: U.S. TROOPS TO BE REPLACED BY VIETNAMESE TROOPS

WASHINGTON — President Nixon announced that the first contingents of U.S. troops to be replaced by Vietnamese troops will be leaving for home this month. The reduction of 25,000 in U.S. forces will decrease the number of U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam to 512,500. This process, called "Vietnamization" by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, signals the first time that a U.S. administration has taken concrete steps to reduce, rather than increase, its involvement in the long and bloody war in Southeast Asia. Draft calls are expected to drop next month as a result of this decision. Whether the North Vietnamese decide to reciprocate by reducing their level of activity or whether they choose to take advantage of the American move and increase their level of activity will probably determine if these withdrawals continue. For the present, Hanoi has not retreated from its demand that President Nguyen Van Thieu step down before elections are held to decide the future of South Vietnam. While Washington is willing to allow the communists to participate in elections, U.S. officials believe that forcing Thieu out of office now would concede the elections to the communists.

In South Vietnam, many U.S. troops seemed skeptical of Nixon's move to withdraw U.S. forces. One soldier commented, "This business is meant to pacify the folks at home." Another predicted, "We're going to stay here for a long time." The troops also doubted the administration's claim that the South Vietnamese (ARVN) soldiers are ready to shoulder the burden of the fighting. "I won't say the ARVNs won't do nothing, but you gotta kick them in the ass to fight," an American soldier said. "When you go on a sweep with them, they spend their time picking fruit and stealing chickens." With U.S. deaths at more than 36,000, the Nixon administration now seems ready to take the gamble with the South Vietnamese army.

July 1969: NIXON VOWS NEW ROLE FOR U.S. IN ASIA

WASHINGTON — During his forthcoming trip to East Asia, President Nixon will explain the new role the United States expects to play in the area after the Vietnam War is over. Already dubbed the "Nixon Doctrine" by some commentators, this approach calls for Asians to bear more of the economic and military burden of protecting Asia. While the United States expects to remain a Pacific power and will continue to support its allies in the area, it will no longer fight for them. "There will be no more Vietnams," according to an administration spokesman.

In addition, the administration has relaxed some of the travel restrictions against China that were put in place nearly 20 years ago by the Truman administration. While permitting American scholars, teachers, scientists, and journalists to travel unimpeded to China does not seem to be a major breakthrough, it may signal the administration's desire to withdraw gradually from the confrontational policies of the past two decades.

November 1969: MASSACRE AT MY LAI — THE FULL STORY

SAIGON — Details have now come to light about an incident that took place in March 1968 in a small South Vietnamese village called My Lai, where at least 100 unarmed men, women, and children were shot by American troops. Charges of murder have been filed by the Army against Lieutenant William Calley, commander of the platoon responsible for the deaths, and Staff Sergeant David Mitchell. Former Army Specialist 4th Class Richard Ridenhour, who served with and knew many of the soldiers involved in the massacre, first reported the massacre to the Army. Although Ridenhour was not present when the killings occurred, he pieced together first-hand accounts told to him by those who were there. His story has been corroborated by a sergeant assigned to the operation and by an Army combat photographer who documented the aftermath of the massacre.

According to reports, My Lai was a fortified hamlet frequently used by the Vietcong. The area around the hamlet was heavily booby-trapped, and American troops sustained almost daily casualties as they sought to drive off the Vietcong. Unable to establish firm control of My Lai, Company C of the 11th Infantry Brigade was given orders to destroy the village. After an hour-long artillery bombardment, one platoon entered the village while two others surrounded it. Inhabitants who had survived the bombardment were herded into groups and shot. Among the dead were women and children under five years of age. There were very few survivors. Reportedly, some troops refused to fire at the civilians and one soldier shot himself in the foot so that he would be evacuated from the scene. It is not clear who ordered the attack on the village and whether Lieutenant Calley, in directing the massacre, was acting on orders given by a superior officer. Initial reports of the massacre from the few survivors were discounted because of the known Vietcong sympathies of the inhabitants.

April 1970: U.S. TROOPS SENT INTO CAMBODIA

WASHINGTON — President Nixon announced this week that he had ordered thousands of American troops into Cambodia to attack and destroy the staging areas from which the Vietcong had launched attacks into South Vietnam. U.S. warplanes bombed areas in which underground concrete bunkers had serviced the Vietcong high command. Although Cambodia is neutral, its territory has long been used by the communists to store supplies and to infiltrate men into South Vietnam. While this is the first time that the United States has admitted to infringing upon Cambodian neutrality, unconfirmed reports indicate that U.S. warplanes have been engaged in bombing missions against communist sites in Cambodia for the past year. The administration has consistently denied that it has been engaged in such an air campaign.

Responding to critics who charged that the president is widening the war rather than bringing it to an end, Nixon maintained that since that area of Cambodia had been occupied by the Vietcong for some time, U.S. actions did not constitute an invasion of Cambodia but merely a tactical extension of the operations against the communists in South Vietnam. "Once enemy forces are driven out of these sanctuaries and once their military supplies are destroyed, we will withdraw," Nixon pledged.

An administration spokesman pointed out that plans to reduce U.S. force levels in Vietnam at the rate of 12,000 per month for the next year will not be affected by the Cambodian operation. Only last week Nixon had said, "Pacification is succeeding. The South Vietnamese can develop the capability for their own defense. We finally have in sight the just peace that we are seeking." Nevertheless, many in Washington fear that U.S. operations in Cambodia run the risk of enlarging the war, rather than bringing the parties closer to the negotiating table.

May 1970: STUDENTS KILLED AT KENT STATE; CAMPUSES ERUPT IN PROTEST

KENT, OHIO — Four students were killed and ten wounded at Kent State University when National Guard troops fired into a large group of demonstrators who had been taunting them. Nine hundred guardsmen had been sent to this state university campus by Ohio Governor James Rhodes to restore order after several days of rioting. Protesters had burned a campus ROTC building to the ground and, defying a curfew, had marched throughout the campus chanting anti-war slogans.

The four deaths resulted when a group of about 100 guardsmen found themselves cut off from the large formation of troops and were confronted by more than 1,000 students, some of whom were throwing rocks at them. According to photographs and eyewitness accounts, the troops had taken a kneeling position and had been given an order to fire a volley into the crowd of students.

Word of the Kent State incident inflamed the unrest many of the nation's colleges and universities have experienced this year. Several hundred institutions have been forced to shut down as a result of the latest protests, which began as a reaction to U.S. military operations in Cambodia. Many professors and college administrators have joined the students in protesting U.S. policies. In New Haven, Connecticut, 4,000 marines and paratroopers have been deployed to deal with the explosive situation at Yale University. At the University of Wisconsin, where 20 fire bombings have taken place so far this year, the National Guard was called out and over 80 students arrested.

Meanwhile in Washington, a split within the Nixon administration over the handling of the protests became public as more than 100,000 demonstrators protested the president's policies within blocks of the White House. In a letter to the president leaked to the press, Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel warned that a hard-line stance could produce a backlash among young people.

"This Administration," Hickel wrote, "finds itself today embracing a philosophy which appears to lack appropriate concern for the attitude of...our young people....If we read history, it clearly shows that youth in its protest must be heard....A continued attack on the young — not on their attitudes so much as their motives — can serve little purpose other than to further cement those attitudes to a solidity impossible to penetrate with reason."

In New York, several hundred construction workers attacked student demonstrators with fists and lead pipes, sending more than 20 to the hospital. Additional reports from Seattle and Chicago indicate that similar incidents are taking place elsewhere in the country. One Chicago worker voiced his disgust for the student protest movement. "To hell with your movement," he said. "There are millions of people like me. We're fed up with your movement. All I can see is a lot of kids blowing a chance I never had." Another Chicago worker stated, "I'm getting to feel like I'd actually enjoy going out and shooting some of those people....They're trying to destroy everything I've worked for — for myself, my wife, and my children." Nixon has maintained that millions of Americans — members of what he has called "the silent majority" — continue to support his policies in Vietnam.

June 1971: SECRET PENTAGON PAPERS ON VIETNAM WAR PUBLISHED

NEW YORK — The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have begun publishing a secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam War that describes the policy-making processes during the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson presidencies. The collection of hundreds of classified documents was given to the newspapers by Daniel Ellsberg, a former Pentagon analyst, who had worked on this study when it was commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1967. Nearly three dozen researchers had worked for a year compiling the materials that show the growing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. McNamara, who had come to doubt the wisdom of the policy he had played a major role in crafting, reportedly ordered the study to provide a full documentary record for future historians. The documents published so far reveal the existence of strong disagreements within the administrations, particularly during the Johnson years, over both objectives and strategies in Vietnam. In addition, the private documents are frequently at odds with public comments made by administration spokesmen at the time — a pattern which some analysts have described as "systematic concealment and misrepresentation."

President Nixon has ordered the Justice Department to seek an injunction in federal court that would bar the newspapers from continuing to publish the documents. The administration has argued that possession of the documents by unauthorized individuals violates federal law; that the publication endangers national security; and that future sensitive negotiations with foreign governments would be hurt by this breach of security. White House sources fear that the administration's search for "peace with honor" has been dealt a serious setback by the publication of the Pentagon study.

February 1972: NIXON VISITS CHINA

BEIJING — President Nixon, who for most of his political career campaigned vigorously against communism, completed one of the most remarkable foreign policy reversals in U.S. history last week when he visited Beijing, the capital of China, and engaged in high level talks with Chairman Mao Zedong and Foreign Minister Chou En-lai. While the Chinese leaders do not appear to have offered any assistance in ending the Vietnam War, both sides agreed to "progress toward the normalization of relations."

Beginning with the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, a major foreign policy objective of the United States had been to isolate and contain the influence of China. The so-called "domino theory," used to justify the early U.S. commitment to South Vietnam, reflected U.S. concern about Chinese influence in Asia. Until recently, the United States had refused to extend official recognition to the communist regime in China.

Nixon's dramatic visit to Beijing had been prepared through several secret missions to the Chinese capital made by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. While the secretary of state maintained that the new relationship between Washington and Beijing "is not directed against the Soviet Union," many observers believe that Chinese fears of their powerful neighbor as well as the administration's desire to put pressure on Moscow provided a common ground for this new policy.

May 1972: U.S. MINES HARBORS OF NORTH VIETNAM

WASHINGTON — In a sharp escalation of U.S. actions in Vietnam, President Nixon ordered the mining of Haiphong harbor and an increase in U.S. air strikes against North Vietnam. These moves are apparently intended to check the momentum of the current communist offensive in the south by cutting communist supply routes. Another objective is to force the North Vietnamese to respond to U.S. peace overtures at the stalled negotiations in Paris. Nixon's latest proposal for a settlement of the war includes an offer to withdraw all U.S. forces within four months of an internationally supervised cease-fire in return for the release of all American prisoners of war. Although the United States remains committed to sending aid to the Saigon government, the political settlement would be worked out by the Vietnamese themselves. Hanoi has remained adamant in demanding that the Thieu regime step down as part of the settlement.

In connection with the mining of Haiphong harbor, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird warned the Soviet Union that the United States would stop "by all necessary means" any Soviet attempt to air-deliver supplies that had previously been shipped by sea. Some analysts have compared this situation to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and have warned against a return to "brinkmanship tactics." In Hanoi, North Vietnamese defense chief Vo Nguyen Giap declared "we are now defeating and definitely will defeat the Nixon war — defeat completely all the adventurous and cruel escalations of the United States imperialists." Hanoi also called for the scheduling of more talks in Paris.

October 1972: PEACE SETTLEMENT NEAR

WASHINGTON — Sources in the Nixon administration say a deadline of October 31 had been tentatively set to sign a peace settlement that would end U.S. involvement in Vietnam. South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu's strong objections to the terms of the proposed settlement, however, threaten to derail the process. Thieu has argued that the terms of the tentative agreement would lead to a communist takeover of his country within six months. In anticipation of the settlement, the Pentagon has restricted its bombing of North Vietnam to targets below the 20th parallel. While the last combat units of U.S. forces left Vietnam in August, the fighting between the South Vietnamese army and North Vietnamese units has flared up in recent weeks.

The proposed settlement reportedly includes a cease-fire, perhaps before U.S. presidential elections in November; the return of prisoners of war and remaining U.S. troops within sixty days; and possible U.S. aid to help rebuild North Vietnam. While direct U.S. involvement in the war would cease under the accord, it is likely that fighting between the communists and the South Vietnamese forces would continue.

November 1972: NIXON WINS RE-ELECTION IN LANDSLIDE

WASHINGTON — Richard Nixon won a second term as president with nearly 61 percent of the votes, defeating Democratic candidate Senator George McGovern. Nixon received the largest popular vote total in U.S. history and carried every state except Massachusetts.

With a peace settlement imminent in the Vietnam War and no American troops now involved in the ground fighting in the south, the president seems on the verge of delivering his promised "peace with honor." In a televised speech at the close of the campaign, Nixon held out the promise that "our children can be the first generation in this century to escape the scourge of war."

McGovern, who has been a leading Senate critic of both the war in Vietnam and overall U.S. foreign policy, never seemed to reach the crucial middle ground of the American electorate. In contrast, Nixon's conservative approach to domestic issues — pledging to avoid new taxes and ruling out new domestic programs — seemed to strike a chord with voters. In the opinion of many analysts, the scale of the victory gives the president a mandate to shape the country's post-Vietnam future.

December 1972: PEACE TALKS COLLAPSE AND BOMBING INCREASED

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's prediction in October that "peace is at hand" was dashed last week in Geneva as peace talks collapsed. Kissinger blamed the breakdown on the North Vietnamese, claiming that Hanoi is trying to modify the tentative agreements reached two months ago. President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam was seen initially as the biggest threat to the peace settlement. Now, however, Hanoi is reportedly seeking language changes that would describe the war as a civil war, implying that Hanoi has a right to keep troops in the south after the United States withdraws its forces.

The Nixon administration is unwilling to sever all commitments to the present Saigon government and Kissinger says the settlement must include "some references — however vague, however illusive, however indirect — which would make it clear that the two parts of Vietnam would live in peace and neither side would impose its solution by force." Since 1954, North Vietnam was fought to unify all of Vietnam under communist control and appears unlikely to abandon that goal now. Observers believe that the Nixon administration is seeking a formula that would give it the opportunity to withdraw from the struggle with some dignity or, as the president has often put it, "peace with honor."

In response to the stalemate in the peace talks, Nixon ordered the most intense bombing of North Vietnam thus far. Nearly 3,000 sorties against North Vietnam have been flown since December 18. The U.S. warplanes have attacked targets throughout North Vietnam, including areas that had previously been off-limits. A Polish freighter was sunk and a Soviet ship and a Chinese vessel were damaged in the bombing around the port area of Haiphong. Fifteen American B-52s have been shot down by enemy fire. Until the current bombing campaign, only one B-52 had been lost in combat during the entire war. Military experts have said that the current bombing campaign is heavier than that experienced by either Germany or Japan during World War II. The total tonnage of bombs dropped on Vietnam by the United States since 1965 exceeds the combined total dropped on both of those countries during World War II.

January 1973: PEACE AT LAST

WASHINGTON — The longest war in U.S. history is over. The peace talks in Paris, which had been resumed on January 8 after North Vietnam experienced the heaviest bombing campaign yet in the war, produced a final settlement on January 23. The agreements largely follow the tentative accord reached last October. The cease-fire agreements were officially signed January 27.

President Nixon went on national television to announce that the United States had achieved "peace with honor" and to lead the nation in a prayer of thanksgiving just as the cease-fire went into effect. In meeting with congressional leaders, the president said, "I thank God for those who stood, thank God for those who gave their lives, thank God for those who suffered. We're damned proud of them." Like the Geneva Accords of 1954, the settlement worked out between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Duc Tho resolves the present military conflict without settling the long-term political settlement in Southeast Asia.

In Saigon, there is a great deal of skepticism regarding the peace agreement. Few believe that the cease-fire will last long after the U.S. forces leave, since the agreement does not require North Vietnam to withdraw its forces from the South. Most felt that the settlement represents at best a pause in the struggle that has lasted nearly 20 years.

April 1, 1973: FINAL AMERICAN POWS RELEASED

WASHINGTON — As the final American troops departed from South Vietnam, the last of the nearly 600 American prisoners of war (POWs) were released in Hanoi today. The returning servicemen, some of whom had been held captive for over eight years, expressed joy that they were at last reunited with their families. Said Air Force Colonel Ronald Byrne, "Our emotions at this time are indescribable. To be back on American soil has been our dream, our prayer for over seven years. You have reached across time and space and brought us home. Thank you, America. Thank you, Mr. President. May God bless you all."

While most seemed only to want to look forward and not speak of the past, a few of the POWs spoke of their long ordeals. Some blamed the anti-war movement for prolonging the war: "Their [anti-war activists] hands are stained with the blood of American G.I.s," said Air Force Colonel James Kasler. Others expressed doubts about the U.S. policy that had sent them to Vietnam. "It was a conflict between the Vietnamese people," said Major Hubert Flesher, "and like it or not, it should have been theirs to decide."

August 14, 1973: BOMBING OF CAMBODIA HALTED

WASHINGTON — Responding to a congressional deadline, President Nixon today ordered an end to the bombing of communist-controlled areas in Cambodia, thus concluding the last U.S. military operation in Southeast Asia. During the past six months, over 32,000 sorties have been flown by U.S. aircraft and nearly 250,000 tons of bombs have been dropped on Cambodia in an attempt to check the communist Khmer insurgents. This tonnage is 150 percent of the total tonnage dropped on Japan during World War II (excluding the two atomic bombs). Since the secret bombing of Cambodia began in 1969, more than 500,000 tons of bombs have been dropped.

Last week, the Senate Armed Services Committee held hearings into the alleged "Cambodian cover-up" — the Nixon administration's policy of concealing from Congress and the American people the extent of U.S. military involvement in Cambodia. A top secret memorandum from the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Earle Wheeler, dated November 20, 1969, stated that "strikes on these latter targets [in Cambodia] will provide a resemblance to normal operations [in South Vietnam], thereby providing a credible story for replies to press inquiries." A former Air Force captain told how he had been ordered to falsify written reports of tactical air strikes to conceal how deep the penetration into Cambodia had been. Further testimony revealed that North Vietnamese field hospitals in Cambodia were given a high priority in targeting, after fixed installations and troop concentrations.

The Pentagon also released last week the final casualty figures and costs for the period of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War:

- 54,136 Americans killed; more than 300,000 wounded; 1,249 missing
- 8,579 U.S. aircraft lost; more than 6,500,000 tons of bombs dropped
- $108 billion spent by the United States
- Nearly 200,000 South Vietnamese killed
- An estimated 932,000 communist Vietnamese killed.

There were no figures for Laotian or Cambodian casualties.

November 1973: CONGRESS LIMITS WAR POWERS OF PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON — Last week, both houses of Congress passed over President Nixon's veto a law that severely limits the power of the president to wage war and to employ U.S. military forces abroad. The new law requires the president to notify Congress within 48 hours whenever he orders U.S. military forces into action abroad or whenever there is a substantial increase in the number of combat-ready American troops stationed abroad. A joint resolution passed by both houses and not subject to the president's veto could then rescind the commander-in-chief's actions. In addition, the president would be required to end military action abroad unless both houses of Congress vote their approval within 60 days.

The proponents of the bill argued that it would prevent a repeat of the executive abuses of power that occurred during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, particularly with regard to the conduct of the Vietnam War. Senate doves, like Jacob Javits of New York, and long-time hawks, like John Stennis of Mississippi, combined forces to produce a 75 to 18 majority in the Senate. In the House, where the bill passed by a margin of 284 to 135, there were five more votes in favor of the measure than the two-thirds needed to override a presidential veto.

President Nixon had argued that the proposed law was both unconstitutional and unwise. "[It would] take away, by a mere legislative act, authorities which the president has properly exercised under the Constitution for almost 200 years," he insisted. In addition, Nixon expressed fears that the restrictive provisions of the bill would prevent the president from responding promptly and effectively to crises abroad, and that the credibility of the president in dealing with foreign leaders would be seriously undermined. Despite these objections, House Majority Democratic Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill said, "If the president can deal with the Arabs, Israelis and the Soviet Union, he ought to be willing to deal with the Congress of the United States."

August 9, 1974: NIXON RESIGNS; FORD BECOMES PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON — The scandal-ridden presidency of Richard Nixon ended today when Richard Nixon became the first president in U.S. history to resign from office. Nixon's departure came one week after the House Judiciary Committee, on a bipartisan vote, had passed a bill of impeachment specifying three counts and had sent the bill to the floor of the full House for action. Even the president's most loyal supporters recognized that impeachment by the full House and removal from office by the Senate seemed unavoidable.

Former Congressman Gerald Ford of Michigan, who was appointed vice president last October to fill the unexpired term of Spiro Agnew, was sworn in as president today. President Ford faces the daunting task of rebuilding the nation's confidence not only in the presidency, but also in the CIA, FBI, and several Cabinet-level departments that have all been implicated, to one degree or another, in the Watergate scandals. President Nixon's fate remains unclear. Federal Prosecutor Leon Jaworski denied that any deal had been made with Nixon. The federal grand jury, which named Nixon as a co-conspirator in the cover-up, is still in session.

Just two weeks ago, the Supreme Court, in a historic decision, ordered Nixon to release to the special prosecutor the secret Oval Office tapes of the president's conversations. The tapes indicated that the president was aware at an early stage of the illegal actions taken by members of his White House staff and his re-election committee. In addition, Nixon apparently approved of actions designed to conceal the extent of the illegal activities and to limit the damage his administration would suffer.

This pattern of illegal activities — now popularly known as the Watergate scandal — began nearly a year and a half before Nixon's landslide re-election victory. In June 1971, following the unauthorized release of the Pentagon Papers and other classified information, the White House assembled a group of investigators, known as the plumbers unit, to stop further leaks. Illegal wiretaps and burglary were used in a largely unsuccessful effort to mute criticism of the Nixon administration, particularly with respect to the conduct of the Vietnam War. This pattern of illegal activities was continued during the re-election campaign. A break-in at the Democratic National headquarters at the Watergate building in Washington was the most notable of the "dirty tricks" that were uncovered. Most damaging to the president was the testimony of White House Counsel John Dean and the revelation of the secret tapes, which clearly indicated Nixon's knowledge of and involvement in the cover-up. This evidence of wrongdoing formed the basis of the obstruction of justice charge in the bill of impeachment passed by the House Judiciary Committee.

February 1975: NORTH VIETNAM LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE SOUTH

SAIGON — Using Soviet-made tanks, an estimated 300,000 North Vietnamese regular troops in South Vietnam have launched a massive coordinated offensive against South Vietnamese positions throughout the country. It now appears clear that the peace settlement negotiated two years ago in Paris between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Duc Tho has failed to halt the fighting in Vietnam. Nearly 30,000 South Vietnamese soldiers have died so far since the 1973 cease-fire. The latest communist offensive threatens to cripple the morale of units still fighting the enemy.

President Gerald Ford has asked Congress for $552 million in emergency military aid to assist the Saigon government and the Lon Nol government in neighboring Cambodia, which is under attack by the Khmer Rouge communist forces. The Khmer Rouge is besieging the capital of Phnom Penh, and has cut off the supplies reaching the city from the Mekong River. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has joined the president in lobbying Congress for the additional aid, arguing that the United States has a moral commitment to assist these governments. He has argued that failure to support the Saigon government would damage the credibility of the United States abroad.

"Can you imagine me telling [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat or [Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak] Rabin that they can have every confidence in American guarantees at the time when we are defaulting on solemn commitments to the Vietnamese?" Kissinger said.

Recent congressional actions in cutting back American military aid to Saigon from $1.1 billion in 1974 to $700 million this year have been cited by the administration as a major cause of the recent communist successes. Congress, however, appears unlikely to grant the president's request. "Once again we are hearing the same old arguments and the same old controversies — over the same old war," said Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana told the president that, "The war was a tragedy and a mistake. We've lost 55,000 lives and spent $150 billion. I will not vote any money for Vietnam or Cambodia."

April 30, 1975: SAIGON FALLS TC COMMUNISTS; BLOODBATH IN CAMBODIA REPORTED

SAIGON — Encountering no resistance, North Vietnamese troops in Soviet-made tanks entered Saigon today and raised the Vietcong flag at the former presidential palace. Celebrating the end of 30 years of war to rid Vietnam of Western influence, the conquerors immediately renamed the capital Ho Chi Minh City. On the eve of the communist takeover, the largest helicopter evacuation in history carried 1,373 Americans and 5,595 Vietnamese to U.S. warships offshore. The emergency evacuation was ordered when communist shelling closed the Tan Sun Nhut airport on April 28. The evacuation of the last Americans from the roof of the U.S. embassy closed the final chapter in the United States' involvement in Vietnam. In addition to those evacuating by helicopter, more than 60,000 Vietnamese have fled by sea.

In Washington, charges of broken commitments arose after two secret letters written by former President Nixon to the Saigon government were released by a former South Vietnamese official. In these letters, written in November 1972 and January 1973, Nixon promised that the United States would "take swift and severe retaliatory action" and would "respond with full force" if North Vietnam violated the Paris cease-fire settlement. Congressional leaders denied that they had been either consulted or informed of these secret commitments.

In the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, victorious communist Khmer Rouge forces reportedly have killed thousands of their former opponents. Sources indicate that mass executions of former Cambodian army officers have taken place. As many as 10,000 Cambodians associated with the former government may be marked for execution. Since all telephone and telegraph communications between Phnom Penh and the outside world have been cut, reliable first-hand accounts are not available. It is likely that the few remaining Western journalists, who are currently restricted to the French embassy, will soon leave the country.

The Songs of War

Introduction

Throughout American history, the strong feelings raised by the sacrifices, ideals, heartbreaks, and triumphs of war have often been expressed by poets and artists in songs. Songs that best captured the strong feelings of Americans became very popular and lived on long after the details of the conflict were forgotten. Whether they expressed patriotism and national ideals such as in the "Star Spangled Banner" and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," sacrifice and heroism such as in "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," or disappointment and loss such as "All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight," these songs have become part of the history. The Vietnam War was no exception. A small selection of the many songs written by Americans and others involved in the Vietnam War is presented here. For each song, be prepared to discuss in class the following:

1. When was the song written and what events were happening at that time?

2. What is the mood of the song? Is it angry, sad, hopeful, sarcastic, joyful, triumphant, etc.? (Remember that songs are meant to be heard, not read. The music may play an important part in conveying the meaning. Would the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" be as moving if it were a waltz instead of a march? If you have access to recordings of any of these songs, bring them in to class.)

3. What attitude toward the war is being expressed? Is this a personal feeling, or is it the expression of a collective attitude?

After you have studied each of the songs, see if you can group them by types or themes. Which seem most similar in content and meaning? Be prepared to explain to the class how and why you arranged them in this way.

LE DESERTEUR (1954, ballad)
THE DESERTER
By Boris Vian
(translated by Lucille Duperron)

Monsieur le President	Mister President
Je vous fais une lettre	I'm writing you a letter
Que vous lirez peut-etre	That you might read
Si vous avez le temps	If you have the time
Je viens de recevoir	I just received
Mes papiers militaires	My military orders
Pour partir a la guerre	To go to war
Avant mercredi soir	Before Wednesday night
Monsieur le President	Mister President
Je ne veux pas la faire	I don't want to do it
Je ne suis pas sur terre	I'm not on earth
Pour tuer des pauvres gens	To kill poor people
C'est pas pour vous facher	It is not that
Il faut que je vous dise	I want to make you angry
Ma decision est prise	But I have to tell you
Je m'en vais deserter	I am going to desert
Depuis que je suis ne	Since I was born
J'ai vu mourir mon pere	I've seen my father die
J'ai vu partir mes freres	I've seen my brothers leave
Et pleurer mes enfants	And my children cry
Ma mere a tant souffert	My mother suffered so much
Qu'elle est dedans sa tombe	That she is in her grave
Et se moque des bombs	And laughs at bombs
Et se moque des vers	And laughs at decay

PULLING OUR ARTILLERY (1954, translation)
Vietminh work song, author unknown

How do we sing, two three how.
How do we sing, pulling our artillery through mountain passes.
How do we sing, two three how, pulling our artillery across streams.
How do we sing, two three how, pulling our artillery across mountains.

The mountains are steep,
But the determination in our hearts is higher than mountains.
The chasms are deep and dark,
But what chasm is as deep as our hatred?

How do we sing, two three how,

WAIST DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY (1967, folk)
By Pete Seeger

It was back in nineteen forty two, I was part of a good platoon
We were on maueuvers in a-Loozianan, one night by the light of the moon
The captain told us to ford a river, and that's how it all begun
We were knee deep in the Big Muddy, but the big fool said to push on

The sergeant said, "Sir, are you sure, this is the best way back to the base?"
"Sergeant, go on; I once forded this river just a mile above this place
It'll be a little soggy but just keep slogging. We'll soon be on dry ground."
We were waist deep in the Big Muddy and the big fool said to push on.

The sergeant said, "Sir, with all this equipment, no man will be able to swim."
"Sergeant, don't be a nervous nellie," the captain said to him.
"All we need is a little determination; Man, follow me, I'll lead on."
We were neck deep in the Big Muddy and the big fool said to push on.

All of a sudden, the moon clouded over, we heard a gurgling cry.
A few seconds later, the captain's helmet was all that floated by.
The sergeant said, "Turn around men, I'm in charge from now on."
And we just made it out of the Big Muddy with the captain dead and gone.

We stripped and dived and found his body stuck in the old quicksand.
I guess he didn't know that the water was deeper than the place he'd once before been.
Another stream had joined the Big Muddy just a half mile from where we'd gone.
We'd been lucky to escape from the Big Muddy when the big fool said to push on.

Well, maybe you'd rather not draw any moral; I'll leave that to yourself.
Maybe you're still walking and you're still talking and you'd like to keep your health.
But every time I read the papers that old feeling comes on:
We're waist deep in the Big Muddy and the big fool says to push on.

Waist deep in the Big Muddy and the big fool says to push on!
Waist deep in the Big Muddy and the big fool says to push on!
Waist deep! Neck deep! Soon even a tall man'll be over his head!
Waist deep in the BIG MUDDY! AND THE BIG FOOL SAYS TO PUSH ON!

THE BALLAD OF THE GREEN BERETS (1966, country)
By Barry Sadler and Robin Moore

Fighting soldiers from the sky, fearless men who jump and die,
Men who mean just what they say, the brave men of the Green Beret.

chorus
Silver wings upon their chest. These are men, America's best.
One hundred men will test today, but only three win the Green Beret.

Trained to live off nature's land, trained in combat hand to hand,
Men who fight by night and day, courage big from the Green Beret.

Back at home a young wife waits. Her Green Beret has met his fate.
He has died for those oppressed, leaving her his last request.

Put silver wings on my son's chest. Make him one of America's best.
He'll be a man they'll test one day. Have him win the Green Beret.

LYNDON JOHNSON TOLD THE NATION (1965, folk)
By Tom Paxton

I got a letter from L.B.J., it said, "This is your lucky day.
It's time to put your khaki trousers on. Though it may seem very queer,
we've got no jobs to give you here, so we are sending you to Viet Nam"

chorus
And Lyndon Johnson told the nation, "Have no fear of escalation,
I am trying ev'ryone to please. Though it isn't really war,
we're sending fifty thousand more to help save Viet Nam from Viet Namese."

I jumped off the old troop ship, I sank in mud up to my hips,
And cussed until the captain called me down, "never mind how hard it's raining,
Think of all the ground we're gaining, just don't take one step outside of town."

Every night the local gentry slip out past the sleeping sentry
They go out to join the old V.C. in their nightly little dramas,
They put on their black pajamas and come lobbing mortar shells at me.

We go 'round in helicopters like a bunch of big grasshoppers
Searching for the Viet Cong in vain. They left a note that they had gone,
They had to get back to Saigon, their government positions to maintain.

Well, here I sit in this rice paddy, wondering about Big Daddy,
And I know that Lyndon loves me so; yet how sadly I remember
Way back yonder in November when he said I'd never have to go.

The word came from the very top that soon the shooting war would stop
The pockets of resistance were so thin. There just remained some trouble spots,
Like Viet Nam, Detroit and Watts, Gene McCarthy and Ho Chi Minh.

They sent me to some swampy hole we went out on a night patrol.
Just who was who was very hard to tell. With Martha Raye and 13 Mayors,
Half of Congress, 6 ball players and Ronald Reagan yelling, "Give 'em hell!"

SOLDIER'S LAST LETTER (originally written 1944, recorded in late 1960s, country)
Recorded by Merle Haggart

When the postman delivered a letter, It filled her dear heart full of joy.
But she didn't know till she read the inside, it was the last one from her darling boy.
chorus
Dear Mom, was the way that it started, I miss you so much, it went on.
Mom, I didn't know that I loved you so, but I'll prove it when this war is won

I'm writing this down in a trench, Mom. Don't scold if it isn't so neat.
You know as you did when I was a kid and I'd come home with mud on my feet.

The captain just gave us our orders, and Mom we will carry them through.
I'll finish this letter the first chance I get, but now I'll just say I love you.

Then the mother's old hands began to tremble and she fought against tears in her eyes.
But they came unashamed for there was no name, and she knew that her darling had died.

That night as she knelt by her bedside, she prayed Lord above hear my plea.
And protect all the sons that are fighting tonight, and dear God, keep America free!

A TALE OF TWO SOLDIERS (1968, folk) translation
By Pham Duy, South Vietnamese folk singer

There were two soldiers who lived in the same village
Both loved the fatherland – Vietnam.
There were two soldiers who lived in the same village
Both loved the fields and the earth of Vietnam.

There were two soldiers, both of one family,
Both of one race – Vietnam.
There were two soldiers, both of one family,
Both of one blood – Vietnam.

There were two soldiers who were of one heart,
Neither would let Vietnam be lost.
There were two soldiers, both advancing up a road,
Determined to preserve Vietnam.

There were two soldiers who traveled a long road,
Day and night, baked with sun and soaked with dew.
There were two soldiers who traveled a long road,
Day and night they cherished their grudge.

There were two soldiers, both were heroes,
Both sought out and captured the enemy troops.
There were two soldiers, both were heroes,
Both went off to "wipe out the gang of common enemies."

There were two soldiers who lay upon a field,
Both clasping rifles and waiting.
There were two soldiers who one rosy dawn
Killed each other for Vietnam
Killed each other for Vietnam.

FIXIN' TO DIE RAG (1968, rock)
By Joe McDonald

Well come on all of you big strong men Uncle Sam needs your help again,
He's got himself in a terrible jam, way down yonder in Viet Nam,
So put down your books and pick up a gun, we're gonna have a whole lot of fun.

chorus
And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for, don't ask me I don't give a damn, next stop is Viet Nam.
And it's five six, seven, open up the pearly gates, Well, there ain't no time to wonder why, whoopee! we're all gonna die.

Come on Wall Street don't be slow. Why, Man, this is war a-Go-Go.
There's plenty good money to be made by supplyin' the Army with the tools of their trade.
But just hope and pray that if they drop the bomb, they drop it on the Viet Cong.

Come on Mothers through the land, pack your boys off to Vietnam.
Come on fathers, don't hesitate, send your sons off before it's too late.
And you can be the first ones on your block to have your boy come home in a box.

Come on Generals, let's move fast; your big chance has come at last.
Now you can go out and get those Reds – cause the only good Commie is one that's dead.
And you know that peace can only be won, when we've blown 'em all to kingdom come.

THE MARCH OF LIBERATION (1966, march) translation
By Luu Nguyen and Long Hung, Hanoi

Our native land is shuddering, filled with hate for him who causes
So much suffering for our people. It calls on us for vengeance,
To repay the debt of blood. Workers and farmers rise up!
Intellectuals rise up! A thundering storm gathers in the China Sea
The tide is rising, and the whole people rise up as high as the tide!

chorus
For our people we march to the front! We'll wipe out the very last Yankee,
And proudly fly our Liberation flag! Let's raise our voices together,
Determined to fight and to win. Our people await the great day
When we sing the song of victory in freedom!

Our hearts are filled with wrath, broken from too much suffering,
From seeing the countryside burnt into ashes, and our cities turned into flames!
We long to be back in our hometowns, but we swear never to go home
Until the enemy is driven out forever, and our land is set free!

We must overcome all our problems! More exploits dared and won,
We must push forward! The golden star lights our road,
The path of revolution! At Kontum we avenge all the suffering.
At Ap Bac the blood debt is paid. We turn our hate into energy,
To make the enemy tremble and fall!

Dawn is breaking everywhere! We grasp our rifles firmly,
And resolutely press on forward. We will have a new life, or die!
The day is not far away, when our people will be happy and free.
From Ca Mau to Vinh-Linh the enemy is in his death-throes.
The sky is rosy with glory, and our golden star flies proudly in the free wind!

MISSING IN ACTION (written in 1951, recorded in the late 1960s, country)
By Arthur Smith and Helen Kaye, recorded by Ernest Tubb

The warship had landed and I came ashore, The fighting was over for me evermore;
For I had been wounded, they left me for dead, A stone for my pillow and snow for my bed.
The enemy found me and took me away and made me a prisoner of war so they say;
But God in his mercy was with me one day; the gate was left open and I ran away.

I returned to the old home, my sweet wife to see, the home I had built for my darling and me.
The door I then opened and there on a stand, I saw a picture of her and a man.
The clothes she was wearing told me a sad tale, my darling was wearing a new bridal veil.
Then I found a letter and these words I read: "Missing in action," she thought I was dead.

So I kissed her picture and whispered goodbye; my poor heart was breaking but my eyes were dry.
I knew she'd be happy if she never learned, I knew she must never know I had returned.
A vagabond dreamer, forever I'll roam, because there was no one to welcome me home;
The face of my darling no more will I see, for missing in action forever I'll be.

SONG OF THE COATS (date uncertain) translation
By Xuan Hong, Vietcong

Brothers brave the rain and sun, heat of day and cold of night.
Coats we sew for ev'ry one, help to warm your will to fight.
Brothers risking death each day as winter hurries on its way.
Oh know that we will do our best, Oh faster sisters take no rest.

chorus
Early to the front they'll go, still, while we hold the coats in our hands,
We pray the sun soon will rise on free Vietnam.

In the forest, dark and green, like a stream of silk our vengeance runs,
Little speedy sewing machines move as one with distant guns,
Oh my fingers, nimbly sew, that our fighters warmly may go.
All of us must do our best, flying fingers, take no rest.

Winter is here, the coats are done. One to warm each fighting girl and boy.
We've sewn our love in every one, filling them with courage, hope and joy.
Early to the front they'll fly, still while we hold them in our hands,
With every coat we pledge our lives to drive the invaders from our land

HONOR OUR COMMITMENT (1966, folk)
By Jacqueline Sharpe

O, gather round you bully boys and hear just what I say.
We've got a Great Society in the good old U. S. A.
So listen, nations of the earth, we give our promise true:
If you don't obey your Uncle Sam, his troops will visit you.

chorus
And we'll honor our commitment, honor our commitment,
Even if the world goes up in the smoke of a mushroom cloud.
Honor our commitment, honor our commitment.
Get buried with our brothers in one great communal shroud.

Now, widows all like candy canes, and orphans all like jam,
And Band-aids come in handy for the wounded in Vietnam.
So send your package out today to the homeless kids and wives,
We're sure the ones we haven't killed will love us all their lives.

We dream of peace 'most every night, we talk of peace each day,
And we have learned a little game we'll teach you how to play.
Now, which hand holds the olive branch and which hand holds the bomb?
You guessed it – this one offers peace, and that one drops napalm.

You marching intellectuals, you poets and you priests,
You mothers with your babes in arms, you longhaired, bearded beasts.
It's all right when you talk of beauty, love and all that pap,
But when it comes to life and death, you'd better shut your trap.

A SOUVENIR FOR YOU (1970, folk ballad) translation
By Linh Phuong, South Vietnamese army officer later killed in combat

You ask me, you ask me when will I return?
Let me reply, let me reply, that I will soon return.
I will return, perhaps as a wreath of flowers.
I will return to songs of welcome upon a helicopter painted white.

You ask me, you ask me when will I return?
Let me reply, let me reply, that I will soon return.
I will return on a radiant afternoon, avoiding the sun,
Wrapped tightly in a poncho which covers all my life.

I will return, I will return upon a pair of wooden crutches.
I will return, I will return as one with a leg blown off.
And one fine spring afternoon you shall go down the street
To sip a cold drink beside your crippled lover.

You ask me, you ask me when will I return?
Let me reply, let me reply that I will soon return.
I will return and exchange a moving look with you.
I will return to shatter your life.

We shall look at each other as strangers
Try to forget the days of darkness, my dear.
You ask me, you ask me when will I return?
Let me reply, let me reply that I will soon return.

I MUST SEE THE SUN (1969, folk) translation
By Trinh Cong Son (the "Bob Dylan" of South Vietnam)

I must see a bright sun upon this homeland filled with Humanity.
I must see a day,
A day when our people rise up to obtain peace,
Calling to each other from all regions: Life!

I must see peace, the happy villages of yesterday have been deserted.
The people of Vietnam have forgotten each other amidst the bullets and bombs.
The days of Vietnam have been darkened by hatred.
I must see peace. I must see peace.

All my beloved brothers, Rise up!
Let's walk in the flickering soul of the nation.
A million pounding human hearts await a million footsteps.
Keep moving forward!

I must see,
I must see a day with peace glowing brightly all around.

BRING THE BOYS HOME (1971, soul)
By Freda Payne

Fathers are pleading, lovers are all alone.
Mothers are praying — Send our sons back home.
They marched them away on ships and planes,
To a senseless war, they see death in vain.

chorus
Bring the boys home,
Bring the boys home,
Bring the boys home,
Bring the boys home.

Turn the ships around, lay your weapons down.
Can't you see them march across the sky,
The soldiers that have died, trying to get home.

Cease all fire, on the battle field.
Enough men have already, been wounded and killed!"

Values and the Vietnam War
Introduction

Values are the convictions, relationships, qualities, and possessions that a society believes are central to its well-being and survival. Values may be intangible or tangible. Intangible values are frequently called beliefs. Tangible values are often called interests. Intangible values usually focus on abstract concepts, such as national freedom, individual liberty, honor, prestige, political power (the ability to influence other countries), and democracy. Some examples of tangible values are territory, monetary reserves, manpower, lives, and access to natural resources. Frequently, tangible resources can be measured in one way or another. For example, land area can be computed, monetary expenditures can be expressed in dollars, and lives lost in a war can be counted. Intangible values are very difficult to measure. Much of the work of foreign policy involves making decisions regarding how tangible values should be "spent" to achieve intangible values. These decisions can be very difficult and very controversial.

Consider the following example: You have worked very hard at your part-time job (tangible value — labor and time) to save several hundred dollars (tangible value — money). You need to buy a new pair of athletic shoes (tangible value — possession) for school. You must decide whether to purchase an inexpensive off-brand pair for $30 or to purchase the shoes worn and advertised by your favorite basketball player, which cost over $100. You hope that the expensive shoes will bring you status (intangible value) among your friends, as well as covering your feet. How do you determine how much increased status you can expect and whether it is worth the additional money?

When nations go to war, huge amounts of tangible values are spent. The cost in resources, manpower, money, and lives is generally far greater than the cost involved in other types of government activities. To justify such costs, governments usually point to the values to be defended or achieved through war. For example, World War II was fought by the United States to preserve American freedom and liberties (intangible); to drive Axis forces out of the countries they had invaded (tangible); and to destroy the ability of the Axis powers to resist (tangible). During World Wars I and II and the Korea War, it was possible to measure both the costs of the war (resources, manpower, money, and lives) and the progress of the war by totaling up the tangible values lost by the enemy (territory, ships, planes, and lives). Using such methods, it was possible to determine whether U.S. objectives were being achieved and whether the costs in values seemed justified.

The Vietnam War was very different for several reasons. First, the objectives of the United States changed as U.S. involvement deepened. Originally, the goal was to preserve a non-communist South Vietnamese government and defeat an insurgency supported by North Vietnam. By 1965, however, the major U.S. objective had become preserving the credibility of American commitments. Four years later, the United States was most concerned with preserving American honor in the face of the apparently inevitable loss of non-communist South Vietnam.

Thus, the principal U.S. objectives after 1965, which led to the "spending" of billions of dollars (tangible value) and thousands of American lives (tangible value), were intangible values such as credibility and honor. While the worth of these intangible values was unclear and at times hotly disputed, the costs in men and money were reported regularly to the American people by the media. Second, because the conflict in Vietnam did not fit the pattern of past wars, it was very difficult to measure the progress of the war effort. Territory that seemed in the hands of South Vietnamese forces during the day might be under the control of the Vietcong at night. Reports of casualty figures were notoriously unreliable, and seemed to have little relationship to the strength of the Vietcong. Finally, the costs of the war in terms of intangible values, such as respect for the United States among our allies and friends, and domestic unrest within the United States, began to mount as the war dragged on. Periodic pronouncements from the administration that the United States had turned a corner, or that a light could be seen at the end of the tunnel met with increasing skepticism from the American people.

While few Americans would have agreed with Senator Ernest Gruening that Vietnam was not worth a single American life, most probably sensed that there was a point beyond which the continued costs could not be justified. How to determine when and if this point had been reached became one of the central issues in the American experience in Vietnam. As George Ball correctly predicted, the more values the United States "spent" (money and lives) to achieve its objective, the more difficult it became to abandon the goals for which the values were spent. The French reached this point after eight years of war, having spent more than 1.6 trillion francs and 21,000 lives. The U.S. government reached this consensus in 1968 after the communist forces launched a widespread offensive on the Vietnamese New Year, or Tet. The war effort that continued after this date was intended primarily to reduce the inevitable loss of prestige and honor (intangible values) that withdrawal would bring. Whether the additional 16,000 American lives lost in combat after January 1969 would have been considered "well-spent" if a "peace with honor" had been achieved is a difficult question to answer. This issue will probably divide Americans for many years to come.

The cartoon to the right expresses one man's opinion of this controversy. Examine it carefully.

1. What two techniques are employed to convey the passage of time?

2. How does the cartoonist express the conflict between tangible and intangible values?

3. How would the cartoon have been drawn differently if the United States had "won" in Vietnam?

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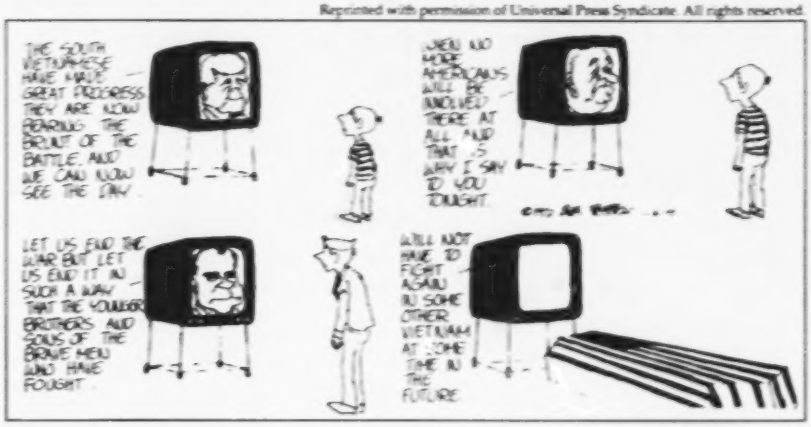
THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS THEY ARE NOW BEARING THE BRUNT OF THE BATTLE. AND WE CAN NOW SEE THE END
WHEN NO MORE AMERICANS WILL BE INVOLVED THERE AT ALL AND THAT IS WHY I SAY TO YOU TONIGHT
LET US END THE WAR BUT LET US END IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE YOUNGER BROTHERS AND SONS OF THE BRAVE MEN WHO HAVE FOUGHT
WILL NOT HAVE TO FIGHT AGAIN IN SOME OTHER VIETNAM AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE

Jules Feiffer. Copyright © 1972 Jules Feiffer

Sanders in *The Milwaukee Journal*. Reprinted with permission.

"What shall I put down as the reason for dying?"

In the cartoon to the left, the man with the book is asking Uncle Sam a very difficult question. You have now studied the reasons why the United States became involved in the Vietnam War and how the events unfolded after the commitment had been made. After talking to your friends and family about this unit, answer the question being asked of Uncle Sam. (Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. This is a very personal judgment of yours concerning this controversial period in recent American history.)

Applying the Lessons of Vietnam

Instructions: People have long debated whether the study of history can provide useful lessons to guide future behavior. The American philosopher George Santayana warned that "those who cannot remember the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat it." In contrast, the American inventor and father of the assembly line, Henry Ford, declared that "history is bunk!" Just as people learn from their experiences (a child who is sprayed by a black and white animal is likely to avoid black and white animals thereafter), so nations, it is argued, learn lessons from history. Many lessons from the American experience in Vietnam have been put forth by historians, politicians, and media commentators. Several of these are summarized below. Read them carefully and answer the following questions for each:

1. Explain why you think this lesson is valid or invalid.

2. If the lesson is valid, how should U.S. behavior change in the future? Are there any foreign policy issues today in which this particular lesson may be a useful guide?

Slow learner

Scott Long in the Minneapolis *Star and Tribune*. Reprinted with permission from Star Tribune, Minneapolis.

Extra challenge: Can you recognize how these lessons were applied by U.S. decision-makers in subsequent cases of American military involvement abroad, such as Lebanon (1983), Grenada (1983), the Persian Gulf crisis (1990-91), and Somalia (1992-93)?

Lesson A: Fight to win; there is no substitute for victory. The American defeat was caused by the failure of the United States to apply its overwhelming military superiority without restrictions. The U.S. government did not try to win. Instead, its objective was to not lose. *Argument:* Throughout the war, the U.S. military was restricted in what tactics could be used, what targets in North Vietnam could be hit, and how many men could be deployed. Fears of negative domestic political repercussions, the displeasure of our allies, and possible involvement by the Soviets or Chinese led the U.S. government to "pull its punches."

Lesson B: Make it quick; make it decisive. The American people grow weary of costly, drawn-out wars that appear to be fought for limited objectives. *Argument:* The people of a democracy will initially support efforts to stop aggression and punish the aggressors. As the struggle continues with mounting costs and unclear results, domestic political opposition will limit the ability of the U.S. government to continue such a policy. There will be strong pressure to escalate or to pull out. The energy that democracies like the United States can bring to a worthy cause must be used quickly, or it will erode.

Lesson C: There is no point in thinking about Vietnam; it cannot happen again. Since the combination of circumstances encountered in Vietnam was unique, there is no "lesson of Vietnam" beyond the simple conclusion that the United States should not get involved in Vietnam again. *Argument:* The failure of the United States to achieve its objectives in Vietnam was caused by several factors, including the difficult jungle terrain, the presence of enemy supply routes that could not be effectively cut, a determined foe that had been fighting for national independence for twenty years, and the lack of popular support for the South Vietnamese government. It is extremely unlikely that the United States will ever again encounter this combination of obstacles. To become obsessed with non-existent lessons would be a mistake, and would inhibit U.S. foreign policy in the future.

Lesson D: Once you have climbed onto the back of the tiger, you have lost your ability to determine where and when you will dismount. Major foreign policy commitments, publicly repeated time and time again, significantly reduce the United States' freedom of action. Events then tend to control U.S. policy, rather than U.S. policy-makers shaping events. *Argument:* Once the major commitments were made in the early and mid-1960s, the United States could not have backed down and accepted the loss of international prestige and influence that such a public reversal would have entailed. Since the situation in Vietnam was far more difficult than our nation had expected, the eventual defeat and national humiliation were inevitable.

Lesson E: If you do not level with the people in the beginning, they will not follow you to the end. A government that loses its credibility with the people loses the ability to mobilize the resources of the nation effectively to achieve difficult and costly objectives. *Argument:* The Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations intentionally concealed from the American people and the Congress the gravity of the battlefield situation in Vietnam, their pessimism about the chances of achieving a favorable outcome, and their estimates of the likely costs and duration of the war. As the American people and the Congress discovered that the war was not going as promised, they ceased to trust their government, and the resulting "credibility gap" fatally damaged the government's ability to lead the nation to victory.

Lesson F: The United States is not all-powerful. Regardless of their desirability, some objectives are just not within the reach of U.S. capabilities, even when these capabilities are employed intelligently and with national determination. *Argument:* The long, nearly unbroken string of foreign policy successes after 1946 led U.S. leaders to believe in their invincibility and wisdom. At least initially, most U.S. decision-makers never seriously questioned whether the United States could and should have shaped the situation in Southeast Asia. Evidence to the contrary was ignored and criticism was dismissed. This "arrogance of power" led to the tragedy of Vietnam. (Note the parallel to the "tragic flaw," which dooms the heroic central figure in classical Greek drama.)

Lesson G: Be very careful what historical lessons you try to apply. By learning too well a lesson from a past experience, a nation may see present challenges through the distorted prism of its memories. This distortion can lead to mistaken policies and ineffective strategies. *Argument:* The lesson of the 1938 Munich agreement dominated the perceptions and responses of U.S. leaders during the 1950s and early 1960s. Similarly, the successes in Western Europe in containing Soviet power led the United States to apply the same methods elsewhere. The situation in Southeast Asia was quite different. The misapplication of the Hitler analogy and the containment strategy led to commitments and policies that could not work regardless of the investment in men and money. The problem in Vietnam was not one of external aggression by a militaristic neighbor, but rather was primarily one of an unresolved civil war that had begun in 1946.

Lesson H: An unrestricted press severely limits the ability of a democracy to fight effectively in a long, complicated war. Since the nature of the media is to focus on the sensational and the tragic, the American

people are inevitably given a distorted picture of the war effort. Public reaction to these distortions deprives the government of the support necessary to continue the war. *Argument:* Vietnam was the first "television war." The horrible cost of the war was brought into American living rooms every evening. The reporters, many of whom were critical of the policies and objectives of the U.S. government in Vietnam, chose to emphasize stories and interpretations critical of the war effort. This biased reporting shaped the perceptions of Americans at home and eroded public support for the war effort.

Lesson I: A team will not win if the players are continually squabbling with the coach, refusing to execute his plays, and insisting that theirs be tried instead. The separation of powers in the American system of government leads to jealousy and rivalry between the executive and legislative branches. During a difficult and complex war, congressional criticism and obstructionism can deprive the president of the prestige and tools necessary to achieve victory. *Argument:* Although the Congress, with very few exceptions, initially supported the war effort, distrust of the White House, disappointment with the lack of progress in the war, and the suspicion that the White House was manipulating Congress caused significant vocal opposition as the war dragged on. This opposition weakened the U.S. position abroad and convinced Hanoi that it could outlast the United States and achieve its long-term goals in South Vietnam.

Lesson J: Do not go it alone when you go to war. The application of U.S. military power is most effective when it is done in the context of a joint effort involving many nations, even if the United States makes the major contribution. *Argument:* The United States failed in its half-hearted attempts to involve its allies in the Vietnam war. Since most of our allies did not perceive the situation and stakes in South Vietnam the way that the United States did, with a few exceptions (small contingents from South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) the United States fought alone with the ARVN. Because our traditional European allies were not involved, they were free to criticize the U.S. effort. These criticisms and the apparent absence of unity among the Western democracies encouraged the resistance of the communists and fed domestic unrest at home. The Korean War demonstrated that a multilateral approach can be very useful in clothing unilateral objectives and actions.

Lesson K: Do not get involved in ground wars on the Asian mainland. Ground wars on the Asian mainland are enormously difficult and next to impossible for the United States to win. *Argument:* Since the population of Asia is many times more than that of the United States, our forces run the risk of being outnumbered. In addition, the terrain lends itself to guerrilla warfare, meaning that large numbers of U.S. troops would be tied down in a protracted conflict, while the enemy would likely enjoy popular support and benefit from resentment against Western imperialism.

Name: _____

Oral History and the Vietnam Experience

Part One — Veterans

Instructions: More than 2.5 million American servicemen and servicewomen served in Vietnam from 1961 to 1972. Some of these veterans are probably among your relatives, friends, and neighbors. Their experiences and recollections are as much a part of the history of the Vietnam War as are the decisions and events that you have studied. To appreciate the human side of the war, you will be asked to talk to people who served in the conflict and record their recollections, experiences, and feelings about their involvement.

Since the Vietnam War is still a very painful memory for many Americans, sensitivity and respect on your part is essential. Try not to interrupt as people tell their stories. Use of a tape recorder can help you avoid distractions during the interview. In the course of the interview, you should seek to answer the questions below. Be prepared to discuss the results of your interview in class.

1. Whom did you interview? When did they serve in Vietnam?

2. What do they remember about their feelings when they found out that they were going to Vietnam? Why, at the time, did they think that they and other Americans were in Vietnam?

3. What vivid memories do they have about their experiences in Vietnam?

4. Did these experiences change how they viewed what they were doing in Vietnam? If so, explain.

5. How were they treated by their friends and family when they returned from the war?

6. How do they now view their service in Vietnam and the reasons for which they were sent?

7. What lessons for Americans, if any, do they see in the Vietnam War experience?

8. Did the interview change your views and conclusions about the war? If so, explain.

Part Two — Non-veterans

Instructions: In addition to the more than 2.5 million servicemen and servicewomen who served in Vietnam, millions of other Americans were deeply affected by the war and involved in the events that you have just studied. Their experiences, like the experiences of the veterans, are a part of the history of the Vietnam War period. To appreciate the human side of the war, you will be asked to talk to people who remember vividly this controversial period and record their recollections, experiences, and feelings about their involvement. The subject of your interview may have actively supported or protested U.S. policies, or may be a close friend or relative of someone who served in Vietnam.

Since the Vietnam War is still a very painful memory for many Americans, sensitivity and respect on your part are essential. Try not to interrupt as people tell their stories. Use of a tape recorder can help you avoid distractions during the interview. In the course of the interview, you should seek to answer the questions below. Be prepared to discuss the results of your interview in class.

1. Whom did you interview? What were they doing during the period of the Vietnam War?

2. What do they remember about their feelings concerning the United States' involvement in Vietnam? What, at the time, did they think was the purpose of U.S. policy?

3. Did their view of the war and opinions concerning U.S. policy during the early stages (1961-1965) of the conflict resemble one of the four options that you studied?

4. Did their view of the war and opinions concerning U.S. policy change with time? If so, explain how and why?

5. What vivid memories do they have about this period?

6. How have their views of the Vietnam War changed since 1973?

7. What lessons for Americans, if any, do they see in the Vietnam War experience?

Biographies of Public Figures Involved in the Vietnam War

George W. Ball

Born on December 21, 1909 in Des Moines, Iowa. Undersecretary of state, the second-ranking post in the State Department, under Kennedy. Ball was a key adviser to the president on U.S. policy in Vietnam, although much of his advice was not followed. In late 1961, Ball strongly opposed the recommendations of presidential advisers General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow to introduce combat forces into Vietnam. Ball consistently argued against deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and was one of the "wise men" (a group of senion statesmen convened in March 1968 to advise Johnson) who convinced the president to de-escalate the war.

McGeorge Bundy

Born March 30, 1919 in Boston, Massachusetts. Special assistant to the president for National Security Affairs, 1961-1966. Bundy became one of the chief architects of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. When the Kennedy administration was considering withdrawal of support for South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, Bundy advised that the United States should not thwart a potentially successfully coup against Diem. Following a trip to Vietnam in February 1965, Bundy recommended that the United States rely heavily on air power, varying the intensity of bombing raids against North Vietnam according to the rate of communist troop infiltration into the south. Convinced that a major U.S. commitment was necessary to keep South Vietnam afloat and to demonstrate U.S. resolve to halt communist expansion, Bundy became a leading spokesman for the administration's position on Vietnam. However, in 1968, Bundy was one of the "wise men" who urged Johnson to de-escalate the war.

William Bundy

Born September 24, 1917 in Washington, D.C. Assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern Affairs under Johnson, 1964-1969. Brother of McGeorge, William Bundy served with the C.I.A. for ten years until 1961, when he shifted to the Defense Department during the Kennedy administration. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, William Bundy recommended an aggressive program to arrest communist expansion in South Vietnam. In May 1966, Bundy submitted a memorandum to Secretary of State Dean Rusk that would serve as a guideline for U.S. policy in Vietnam until 1969. The paper argued that bombing was a viable means of bringing North Vietnam to the bargaining table, and that the United States should cease bombing operations only if the North Vietnamese agreed to limit infiltration of troops into the south and to halt Vietcong operations there. In the spring of 1967, Bundy opposed continued escalation of the conflict, claiming that such a policy would have an adverse effect on U.S. allies and would have limited impact on Hanoi. William Bundy left government service in 1969.

Clark M. Clifford

Born on December 25, 1906 in Fort Scott, Kansas. Special counsel to President Truman, 1946-1950. Clifford was one of the architects of the Truman Doctrine. An esteemed Washington lawyer, Clifford joined the Johnson administration as secretary of defense in January 1968 after McNamara's resignation. Clifford quickly maneuvered to steer Johnson away from further escalation of the war. In March 1968, Clifford arranged the meeting of the "wise men," the group of senior statesmen who convinced Johnson to de-escalate U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Ngo Dinh Diem

Born in 1901 in the French protectorate of Annam. Ngo Dinh Diem was an intense anti-communist nationalist from a Catholic family of central Vietnam. Diem returned from exile in the United States in 1954 to become prime minister to Bao Dai, whom he defeated the next year in a referendum in which voting fraud was suspected. Diem refused to hold nationwide elections as prescribed under the 1954 Geneva agreement. Devoting much of his energy as leader to the establishment of military and police units for his own protection and for use against his political rivals, Diem was criticized harshly for persecuting Buddhists and

other dissidents. He was overthrown and assassinated by his own generals in November, 1963 with the tacit approval of the Kennedy administration.

John Foster Dulles

Born on February 25, 1888 in Washington, D.C. Secretary of state under Eisenhower from 1953 to 1959. Dulles viewed the communist insurgency in Southeast Asia as part of a Soviet plan to spread communism throughout the world and proposed using nuclear weapons to gain victory in Vietnam. However, Dulles' approach failed to generate support in Congress or from Britain and France. At the Geneva Conference of 1954, Dulles opposed a negotiated settlement, and on his order the United States did not sign the Geneva Accords. In the fall of 1954, Dulles announced that military and economic aid and advisers would be sent to South Vietnam to help the Diem government solidify its position. Terminally ill, Dulles resigned in April 1959 and died on May 24 of the same year.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Born on October 14, 1890 in Denison, Texas. Thirty-fourth president of the United States, 1953-1961. As a presidential candidate in 1952, Eisenhower promised to end the Korean War. In 1953, he helped arrange an armistice to end the conflict. The following year, he decided not to commit ground or air forces in support of the French at Dienbienphu, although he did furnish financial aid to the French war effort. Under Eisenhower's administration, the "domino theory" — the belief that the nations of Southeast Asia could fall one by one to communism if the communist insurgency in Vietnam was not contained — emerged as a key element in U.S. foreign policy. Eisenhower provided economic and military aid for the government of South Vietnam, and urged his successor, John F. Kennedy, to be vigilant in Southeast Asia. Eisenhower died on March 28, 1969.

Vo Nguyen Giap

Born in 1912 in Quang Binh Province in the French protectorate of Annam. Giap is modern Vietnam's foremost military figure. He taught high school history and studied law at the University of Hanoi while engaging in communist activities. Giap created the Vietminh military organization that defeated the French at Dienbienphu. He continued as the chief communist strategist in the war against the United States and South Vietnam. While he virtually retired from public life after 1975, Giap remained influential as an elder statesman in North Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh

Born Nguyen Tat Thanh in 1890 in central Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh as a youth traveled the world, moved to Paris in 1917, and remained there for several years. Ho became a founding member of the French Communist party in 1920, went to Moscow four years later, and became a communist agent. He used a number of aliases, among the best known of them being Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot). Ho founded the Indochinese Communist Party in Hong Kong in 1930. He returned to Vietnam in 1941 and created the Vietminh. He soon adopted his most famous alias, Ho Chi Minh (He Who Enlightens). Ho proclaimed Vietnam's independence from France in September 1945, then fought the French for the next nine years. Ho served as president of North Vietnam — the Democratic Republic of Vietnam — from 1945 until his death in September 1969.

Lyndon B. Johnson

Born on August 27, 1908 in Stonewall, Texas. Thirty-sixth president of the United States, 1963-1969. Johnson served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948. He became Senate majority leader in 1953. Chosen to be Kennedy's running mate, Johnson was elected vice president in 1960. After Kennedy's assassination, Johnson assumed the presidency and inherited the Vietnam dilemma. While trying to avoid a full-fledged war, Johnson authorized the bombing of North Vietnam and the first major deployments of U.S. ground troops in the south. After the communist offensive in early 1968, Johnson announced that he would halt the bombing of North Vietnam and would not run again for president. Johnson died in 1973.

George F. Kennan

Born on February 16, 1904 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Charges d'Affairs, Moscow Embassy, 1944-46; ambassador to the Soviet Union under President Truman, 1951-1952. An early specialist in Soviet affairs, Kennan served as chairman of the State Department's policy planning staff, counselor to the State Department, and ambassador to the Soviet Union. After World War II, Kennan developed the strategy of "containment" to block Soviet expansion. Kennan imagined that containment would be limited to Europe and would eventually force a major shift in Soviet policies. In the mid-1960s, Kennan emerged as an important critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Kennan argued that Vietnam was not vital to U.S. interests, and questioned whether U.S. credibility or prestige would be seriously damaged by a withdrawal.

John F. Kennedy

Born on May 29, 1917 in Brookline, Massachusetts. Thirty-fifth president of the United States, 1961-1963. Served as senator from Massachusetts from 1953-1963, both supporting and criticizing U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. During his presidency, Kennedy committed the first substantial military personnel, serving as advisers, to South Vietnam. He subscribed to both the containment doctrine and the domino theory in seeking to block communist expansion into South Vietnam — and the rest of Southeast Asia. Kennedy gave his tacit approval to the coup that led to the assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. John F. Kennedy was himself assassinated on November 22, 1963.

Henry A. Kissinger

Born on May 27, 1923 in Furth, Germany. Kissinger immigrated to the United States in 1938. Appointed national security adviser by Nixon in 1969, Kissinger held secret talks with North Vietnamese diplomats up until the end of the war. In January 1973, Kissinger negotiated with Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam to achieve the Paris peace settlement. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, who refused to accept it. Nixon later appointed Kissinger secretary of state, a position that he held under both Nixon and Ford, from 1973 to 1977.

Henry C. Lodge

Born on July 5, 1902 in Nahant, Massachusetts. Ambassador to South Vietnam under Kennedy and Johnson, 1963-1964 and 1965-1967. The grandson of an illustrious senator, Henry Cabot Lodge held several important posts, among them senator from Massachusetts and ambassador to the United Nations during the Eisenhower administration. As ambassador to Vietnam, Lodge played a key role in the Kennedy administration's decision to allow the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem to be overthrown. In March 1968, while serving as a member of the "wise men," Lodge was reluctant to vote for a dramatic change in policy. In January 1969, Nixon appointed Lodge chief negotiator to the Paris peace conference. Frustrated by North Vietnamese intransigence, Lodge asked to be relieved in October 1969. He died in 1985.

Mao Zedong

Born on December 26, 1893 in Shaoshan, a village in the Hunan Province of China. Mao is best known for his role as Chinese Communist Party chairman. Mao led the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government in 1949, providing the Vietnamese with an important example of successful communist revolutionary warfare. U.S. policymakers during the Vietnam War were extremely concerned about the threat of "Chinese expansionism." At the same time, they wished to avoid a direct confrontation with China. Mao supported the Vietcong and North Vietnamese with military and financial aid. In 1966, however, he turned more inward, sponsoring a tumultuous "Cultural Revolution" within his own country. Mao first warned the North Vietnamese against negotiating with the United States, then invited President Nixon to China in February 1972. Mao died in 1976.

Robert S. McNamara

Born on June 9, 1916 in San Francisco, California. Secretary of defense under Kennedy and Johnson, 1961-1968. A Ford Motor Company executive from 1946 to 1961, McNamara joined the Kennedy administration in 1961. McNamara shaped U.S. policy in Vietnam — and the presentation of that policy to the American people — as much as any American with the

exception of Presidents Johnson and Nixon. While publicly confident about U.S. capabilities in Vietnam, McNamara grew increasingly doubtful in private. Disenchanted with the war, he resigned as secretary of defense in 1968 and became president of the World Bank.

John T. McNaughton

Born on November 21, 1921 in Bicknell, Indiana. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs under Johnson, 1964-1967. McNaughton served as Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's chief assistant in developing strategy in Vietnam. Maintaining in 1965 that changing the military situation in Vietnam might take a "massive deployment" of U.S. troops, McNaughton advised Johnson to employ marine units in active combat operations against communist forces. In April 1966, McNaughton reversed his previous endorsement of the domino theory. By May 1967, he had become alarmed by the growing public protest against the war and advised Johnson to refuse the military's request that an additional 80,000 U.S. troops be sent to Vietnam. In June 1967, McNaughton became secretary of the navy. On July 19, 1967, he was killed in an airplane crash in North Carolina along with his wife and son.

Pierre Mendes-France

Born on January 11, 1907 in Paris, France. Mendes-France was a maverick political figure who warned against French involvement in Indochina. He was elected prime minister in June 1954 during the Ceneva Conference and met a self-imposed deadline to reach an armistice there. He was ousted from office soon after. Mendes-France died in 1982.

Richard M. Nixon

Born on January 9, 1913 in Yorba Linda, California. Thirty-seventh president of the United States, 1969-1974. Nixon was elected to the House of Representatives from California following service in the navy during World War II. In 1950, he won a seat in the Senate. Advocating a strong anti-communist stance, Nixon served two terms as vice president under Eisenhower, but was narrowly defeated by John Kennedy in the presidential election of 1960. In 1968, Nixon won the presidency. While he ran on a campaign of ending the Vietnam war, Nixon did not actually achieve a settlement until January 1973. "Vietnamization" and the Nixon Doctrine were instituted during the Nixon presidency. Intensive bombing of Hanoi and diplomatic overtures to China and the Soviet Union also occurred during the Nixon presidency. Nixon won reelection in 1972, but was forced by the Watergate scandal to resign in August 1974.

Walt W. Rostow

Born on October 7, 1916 in New York City. National security adviser under Johnson, 1966-1968. Rostow went from a distinguished academic position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to a top State Department job during the Kennedy administration. In 1961, Rostow participated in an official fact-finding mission in South Vietnam. Upon his return, he recommended that the United States substantially increase its military commitment to South Vietnam. As Johnson's national security adviser, Rostow favored forceful action in Vietnam. He argued that externally supported insurgencies could be stopped only by escalating military measures against the external source of support. Thus, he favored bombing North Vietnam and maintained that position until Johnson's decision to de-escalate the war. After serving under Johnson, Rostow taught at the University of Texas.

Dean D. Rusk

Born on February 9, 1909 in Cherokee Country, Georgia. Secretary of state under Kennedy and Johnson, 1961-1968. Rusk devoted more years to Vietnam than any other senior U.S. official, having faced the problem as assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs as early as 1950. Rusk consistently favored strong U.S. involvement, arguing that "Chinese expansionism" and "aggression" had to be stopped. He helped President Johnson make important decisions on escalation of the conflict. In 1964 and 1965, Rusk opposed attempts to negotiate a settlement, arguing that with the Vietcong controlling more than half of South Vietnam, the United States could not bargain from a position of strength. Rusk left office in January 1969.

Maxwell D. Taylor

Born on August 26, 1901 in Keytesville, Missouri. Maxwell Taylor served as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff under Kennedy and Johnson, 1962-1964. An advocate of "flexible response" rather than "massive retaliation," Taylor was known as Kennedy's favorite general. In 1961, after participating in a fact-finding mission in South Vietnam, Taylor recommended deepening the U.S. military commitment in Southeast Asia. Kennedy appointed Taylor as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff in 1962. Johnson appointed him ambassador to South Vietnam in 1964. As ambassador, Taylor pressed for a return to civilian rule after the military coup that overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem. In July 1965, Taylor was named as a special consultant to Johnson. As a member of the "wise men" convened in March 1968 to advise the president on the war, Taylor was opposed to the policy of disengagement recommended by a majority of the group. Taylor died in 1986.

Nguyen Van Thieu

Born on April 5, 1923 near Phan Rang in the French protectorate of Annam. Thieu served briefly in the Vietminh before joining the Vietnamese army created by the French. He trained in France and later in the United States and took part in a coup orchestrated by Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky in December 1964. Thieu became chairman and chief of state of South Vietnam in 1965 and maneuvered to become president in 1967. Indecisive and mistrustful, Thieu fled Vietnam just before the fall of Saigon in late April 1975. He lived thereafter in Britain.

William C. Westmoreland

Born on March 26, 1914 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. Chief tactical commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam under Johnson, 1964-1968. Westmoreland served as deputy commander and then commander of the MACV (U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam) in June, 1964. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Westmoreland assumed the added responsibility of commanding U.S. combat forces in Vietnam. A controversial figure, Westmoreland drew strong criticism when he requested a large number of additional troops for deployment to Vietnam after the communist offensive in early 1968. Westmoreland become chief of staff of the army in 1968.

Recommended Readings for the Teacher and Advanced Student

Berman, Larry. *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982. 203 pages.

Buttinger, Joseph. *Vietnam — A Dragon Embattled: Volume II, Vietnam At War.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967. 680 pages.

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Fall, Bernard. *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966. 493 pages.

Gurtov, Melvin. *The First Vietnam Crisis.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1967. 228 pages.

Jamieson, Neil L. *Understanding Vietnam.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 425 pages.

Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History.* New York: Viking Press, 1991. 768 pages.

Randle, Robert F. *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969. 639 pages.

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